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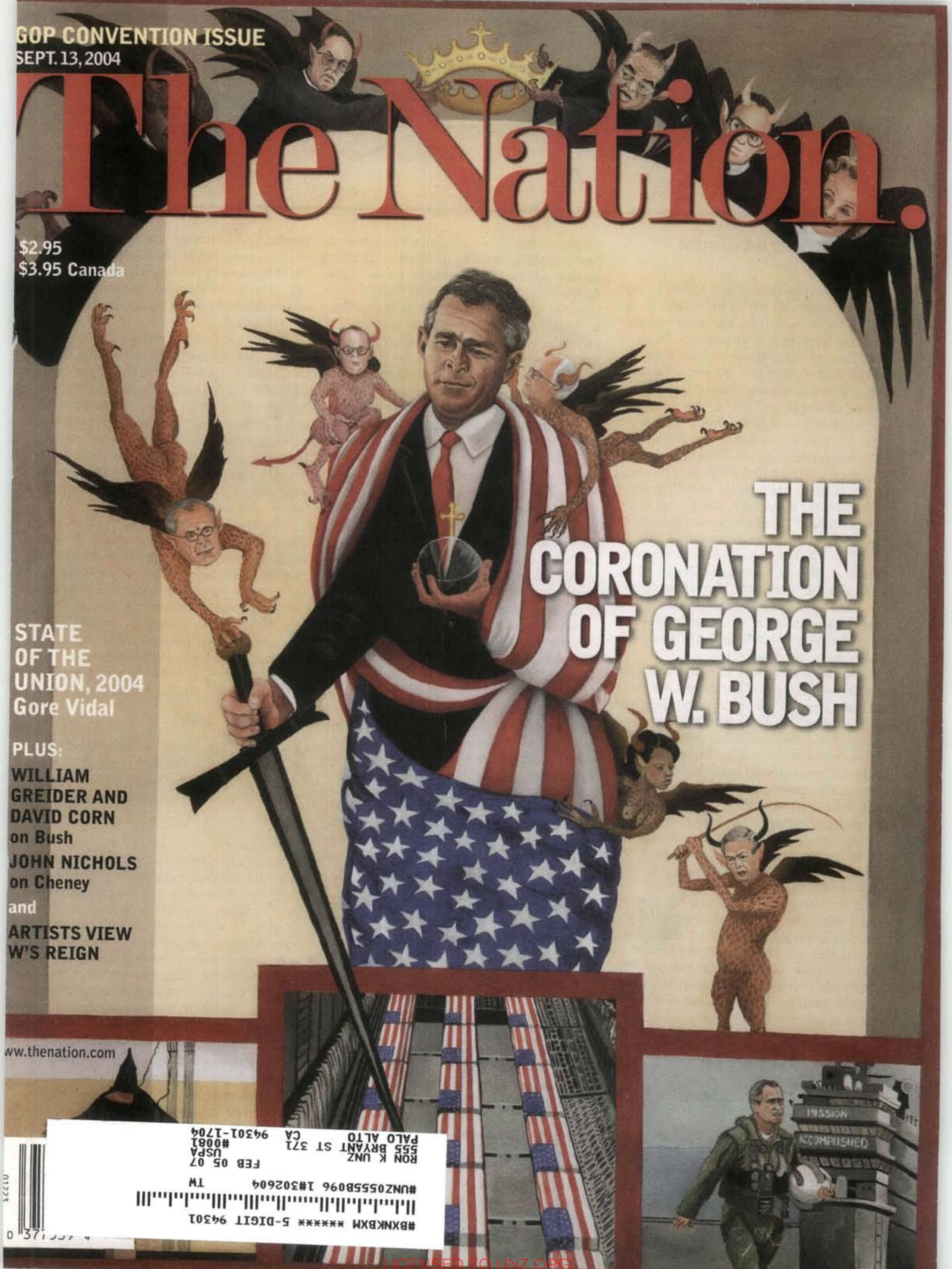

THE CORONATION OF GEORGE W. BUSH

STATE OF THE UNION, 2004
Gore Vidal

PLUS:

WILLIAM GREIDER AND DAVID CORN
on Bush

JOHN NICHOLS
on Cheney

and

ARTISTS VIEW W'S REIGN

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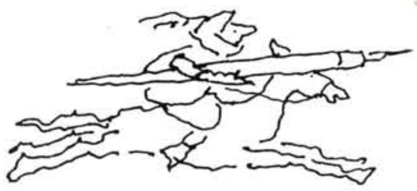

R.O. BLECHMAN

DEMS: 98-POUND WEAKLINGS?

Endicott, NY

■ In Eric Alterman's August 2/9 "The Liberal Media" column, in which he brilliantly describes how we were led to war under false pretexts, one larger issue is glossed over. He mentions that the Republicans, despite their impeachable acts, may win in November "with the help of Republican stooge Ralph Nader and his misguided supporters." I do not defend Nader. But Nader and his supporters are what you get when you have a weak and centrist Democratic Party that is constantly outwitted by or appeasing the radical right. Had things been reversed, do you think the right would sit back and say, "Let's wait for the election and get rid of the lying President"? Hell no! Even if they didn't have enough time for an impeachment process, they'd start it. They'd be spitting and fighting their way all over Washington. They'd be attacking on multiple fronts. They'd even (gasp!) cheat and lie to win, because they believe their cause is just. Democrats' perceived inaction and lack of ferocity in calling Bush what he is makes them seem like losers.

The Democratic Party, of course, has traditionally been the party of just causes—the political home for people who believe in working hard for a living and that working full time should get you the basic trappings of the American dream, people who believe that blacks, women, gays and other groups should have equal rights, who believe the environment is worth protecting, who believe the country is of, by and for the people, not the elites or the corporations. Nader's measly vote count shouldn't affect a strong party of the people, because the Democrats should have a huge lead. Democrats have a just cause; they just don't act like it.

If the Democratic Party made big plans for the future or fought the radical right, Nader's message would have no resonance. If Democrats turned their shrill Nader attacks toward the proper targets—anti-American policies of the GOP—they would have no trouble winning national elections. The Democrats aren't losing the game because of Nader. Nader is only one of many symptoms of the party's decline. Enough with Nader-bashing—fight the real fight!

JOE ITALIANO

HEALTHCARE FOR ALL! NOW!

Washington, DC

■ We were pleased to see Katha Pollitt's June 21 "Subject to Debate" column on health insurance. Her moving stories about people struggling with cancer, addictions, car accidents and the inability to afford blood-pressure medicine are multiplied by the millions in our hodgepodge healthcare system. Even people who are insured face incredible obstacles to decent healthcare because of insurance payments, co-pays, deductibles and insurance company limitations of coverage. The World Health Organization lists the United States as thirty-seventh in healthcare provision. Pollitt writes, "The simple solution would be a single-payer system like Canada's." Then she asks, "But where's the big, irate, energetic movement for it?"

We have the answer. A new movement is burgeoning. At the community level, ordinary people are creating new coalitions. At the national level, it is made up of such groups as the Coalition of Labor Union Women, the United Steelworkers of America, the United Methodist Church and the Older Women's League, as well as young groups like the American Medical Students Association and the League of Indypendent Voters. And there is an army of community groups around the country bubbling with frustration over the healthcare system, fighting for a single-payer system.

At the national level, the Campaign for a National Health Program NOW, along with the 12,000-strong Physicians for a National Health Program, are organizing for John Conyers's H.R. 676, which would provide for universal, publicly funded, privately delivered healthcare for everybody in this country. This bill would eliminate the big insurance companies' hundreds of billions from our $1.7 trillion healthcare budget, thereby providing enough money for a system that covers all. Everybody would get medical, dental and optical, specialists, mental health, prescription drugs, drug treatment, hospitals and long-term care, among other healthcare essentials. Check out the bill on our website www.cnhpnow.org.

Around the Republican convention we are organizing a conference pushing this movement forward, to be held at the CUNY Graduate Center. The conference is free. Everybody is invited. We see this as the new civil rights–human rights issue of the decade.

MARILYN CLEMENT
The Campaign for a National Health Program NOW

Cambridge, Mass.

■ Katha Pollitt mistakenly implies that universal coverage would increase health spending. It's true that Kerry's plan would boost health spending by tens of billions and still leave many uninsured or underinsured. But single-payer national health insurance could cover the uninsured and upgrade coverage for the millions of Americans with inadequate Medicaid plans or skimpy private coverage, without increasing overall medical costs. How? By slashing the paperwork required to maintain our fragmented, profit-oriented insurance system. Our research, published in *The New England Journal of Medicine* in 2003, estimates these potential savings at $300 billion annually; billions more could be saved on healthcare firms' outrageous profits.

Experience in other nations also indicates that universal coverage need not be costly. While the United States will spend $6,200 per capita on healthcare this year, Canada and European nations with national health insurance spend half that much. Indeed, our $3,600 per capita in public spending is more than Canada, Germany, France or Sweden spend for their entire health systems—public plus private. In essence, Americans already pay for national health insurance, we just don't get it.

We're not the only ones who think a single-payer system could cover everyone without increasing costs. The Congressional Budget Office, the Government Accountability Office and even private consulting firms of conservative bent have reached the same conclusion. That's why national health insurance is neither a liberal nor a conservative proposal—it combines liberal benefits and conservative spending.

DAVID U. HIMMELSTEIN, MD
STEFFIE WOOLHANDLER, MD

WARPED BY 'WAR'

A record-setting amount of mail arrived in response to William Greider's June 21 "Under the Banner of the 'War' on Terror"—99.9 percent of it overwhelmingly positive. Below is a sample. *—The Editors*

St. Paul, Minn.

■ William Greider's wise article illustrates the profound thesis of Ernest Becker's book *Escape From Evil*: Whenever a society attempts to make itself radically invulnerable against an "agent of death," real or imagined, it risks creating far more evil in the process. This dynamic has propelled many of history's worst calamities: Germans seeking a "final solution" to a Jewish "threat"; Inquisitors killing witches and heretics who "threatened" to lead churchgoing souls to hell; and various "ethnic cleansings."

When politicians propose to improve public safety by modest means, listen. When they promise to utterly crush some grand incarnation of evil by triumphal, heroic means, run like hell. Such politicians are more dangerous than the bogymen from which they promise to protect us.

Radical invulnerability is simply not given to us mortal human beings. The hubris of "total security" may be the darkest temptation luring modern politicians.

PAUL M. BISCHKE

(Continued on Page 42)

Printed August 25
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IN THIS ISSUE

2 LETTERS

EDITORIALS & COMMENT

3 A FAILED PRESIDENCY
4 DAMAGED GOODS
William Greider
8 THE WAR ON DISSENT
Nancy Chang
10 BILLBOARD BARONS
David Montero
10 PATRIOT AT THE BAT
Richard Pollak
14 THE GEORGE W. BUSH PRESIDENTIAL LIBRARY, INC.
Richard Lingeman
16 LETTER FROM GROUND ZERO
Imperialism Without Empire
Jonathan Schell

COLUMNS

12 DEADLINE POET
On Bush and Vietnam…
Calvin Trillin
18 BEAT THE DEVIL
Zombies for Kerry
Alexander Cockburn
20 SUBJECT TO DEBATE
Bush Bashers…
Katha Pollitt
22 LOOKOUT
Bring Najaf to New York
Naomi Klein

ARTICLES

23 STATE OF THE UNION, 2004
Gore Vidal
30 HUNTING FOR RINOs
John Nichols
36 A LITTLE EDUCATION CAN BE A DANGEROUS THING
John Nichols
37 SHH, DON'T TELL THE SWING VOTERS
David Corn

ART

5 THE GOP ARRIVES: *Rick Meyerowitz*
25 RIPPED: *Hans Haacke*
27 BAD BOY: *Anita Kunz*
33 RUDY: *Sandra Harper*
35 SUCCESSFUL MISSION: *Peter Kuper*
39 FLIP-FLOPS: *Steve Brodner*
41 NO MULLIGANS: *Mykola Duzyj*

BOOKS & THE ARTS

43 BERLIN: Flourishing: Letters, 1928–1946
Sunil Khilnani
49 LEWIS: From Babel to Dragomans: Interpreting the Middle East
Charles Glass
56 LEVENSON: The Secret Epidemic: The Story of AIDS and Black America
BEHRMAN: The Invisible People: How the U.S. Has Slept Through the Global AIDS Pandemic, the Greatest Humanitarian Catastrophe of Our Time
GOSTIN: The AIDS Pandemic: Complacency, Injustice and Unfulfilled Expectations
Sheila M. Rothman
62 FILMS: Bright Leaves • Almost Peaceful
Stuart Klawans

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Steve Brodner coordinated the special art for this issue with research assistance from Ellen Zucker. Illustrations by R.O. Blechman, Ryan Inzana

EDITORIALS

A Failed Presidency

As Republicans gather in New York City, the Bush campaign will undergo a drastic makeover, camouflaging gutter tactics with a veneer of moderation calculated to help the President win another four-year term. But the hard truth of this campaign is that George W. Bush, while attempting to impose an extremist right-wing agenda on this country and the world, has compiled a record of staggering failure.

The debacle in Iraq has already claimed close to 1,000 American and 12,000 Iraqi lives. Far from making America safer or the Middle East more democratic, it has turned out to be what this magazine warned it would be: a reckless abuse of power that has damaged US security, destabilized the region and undercut America's position in the world. The high cost of the war is evident not just in the number of deaths but also in burgeoning federal budget deficits (the war has cost more than $125 billion) and in the record gasoline prices Americans now pay. It is also evident in the reported swelling of the ranks of Al Qaeda–inspired groups and in the rising hatred of America reflected in public opinion polls showing that even among traditional allies like Jordan and Egypt, as much as 95 percent of the population view the United States with disfavor. Meanwhile, the war has diverted resources from urgent international problems ranging from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the widening AIDS pandemic.

And there's no end in sight. The US occupation grinds on with both Bush and his Democratic opponent, John Kerry, ignoring the only intelligent alternative: a phased US withdrawal. Iraqi opposition to the occupation remains fierce—expressed even by Iraqi soccer players at the Olympics—while the country's appointed leaders display authoritarian tendencies that undermine the democracy Bush and his aides claim is being built.

If the war were Bush's only failure, it would be enough to require his departure. But it is not. By withdrawing the United States from international treaties and conventions, mishandling crises in the Middle East and North Korea and diverting resources from the pursuit of Al Qaeda, Bush has left America more isolated and less secure. And the detention camps made infamous by the crimes of Abu Ghraib have stripped America of the pride we once had in our country and the role it played, however imperfectly, as a champion of human rights, economic opportunity and the rule of law.

At home, Bush's failures are equally manifest. He has amassed the worst jobs record of any President since the Great Depression, the worst budget deficits ever and the most precipitous decline in America's fiscal position—from $5 trillion in projected surplus to $4 trillion in projected deficit. Bush's Administration responds to a corporate crime wave with calls for less regulation, embraces the flight of jobs abroad as good for the economy and exacerbates, with top-end tax cuts, the greatest inequality since the Gilded Age.

This Administration has also undermined the rights and policies that social movements labored for a century to achieve. Bush has nominated to the federal bench ideologues with a history of antiunion and antichoice decisions. He signed into law the blatantly unconstitutional "partial birth" abortion ban and then watched as his Attorney General sought access to women's private medical records to defend the ban in court. He imposed the policy known as the global gag rule, which forbids foreign groups re-

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ceiving US aid from even mentioning abortion, and vastly expanded a misinformation campaign about the dangers of sex that has been shown to encourage risky behavior among young people. And to secure his place forever in the hearts of cultural conservatives, he endorsed the gay-baiting federal marriage amendment, framing it as a response to the activism of liberal judges rather than what it was: an attempt to deny civil rights to millions of Americans and to enshrine that discrimination in the Constitution. Civil liberties, too, have suffered, as the "war on terror" has been used to justify acts ranging from detention without trial to snooping into citizens' library records.

The list of failures goes on. The Bush years have seen a steady increase in the number of Americans without healthcare while drug company profits have soared. Bush's prescription drug bill *prohibits* Medicare from negotiating a better price for seniors and bars importing cheaper drugs—with the result that older Americans will end up paying more for prescription drugs. Bush's vaunted No Child Left Behind education law actually leaves most children behind. Not only has the law earned the ire of educators; Bush's failure to provide promised funding for his "reforms" has prompted rebuke even from Republican state legislatures from Utah to Virginia. Bush also broke his promise to increase the amount of money eligible students could receive in college scholarship grants, even as soaring tuition puts college out of reach for ever more families. His postelection budget calls for yet more cuts to education funding. The Bush Administration has also failed to protect the environment, giving us new laws written by polluters, oil lobbyists and Enron executives. And it has politicized and distorted basic scientific and medical research.

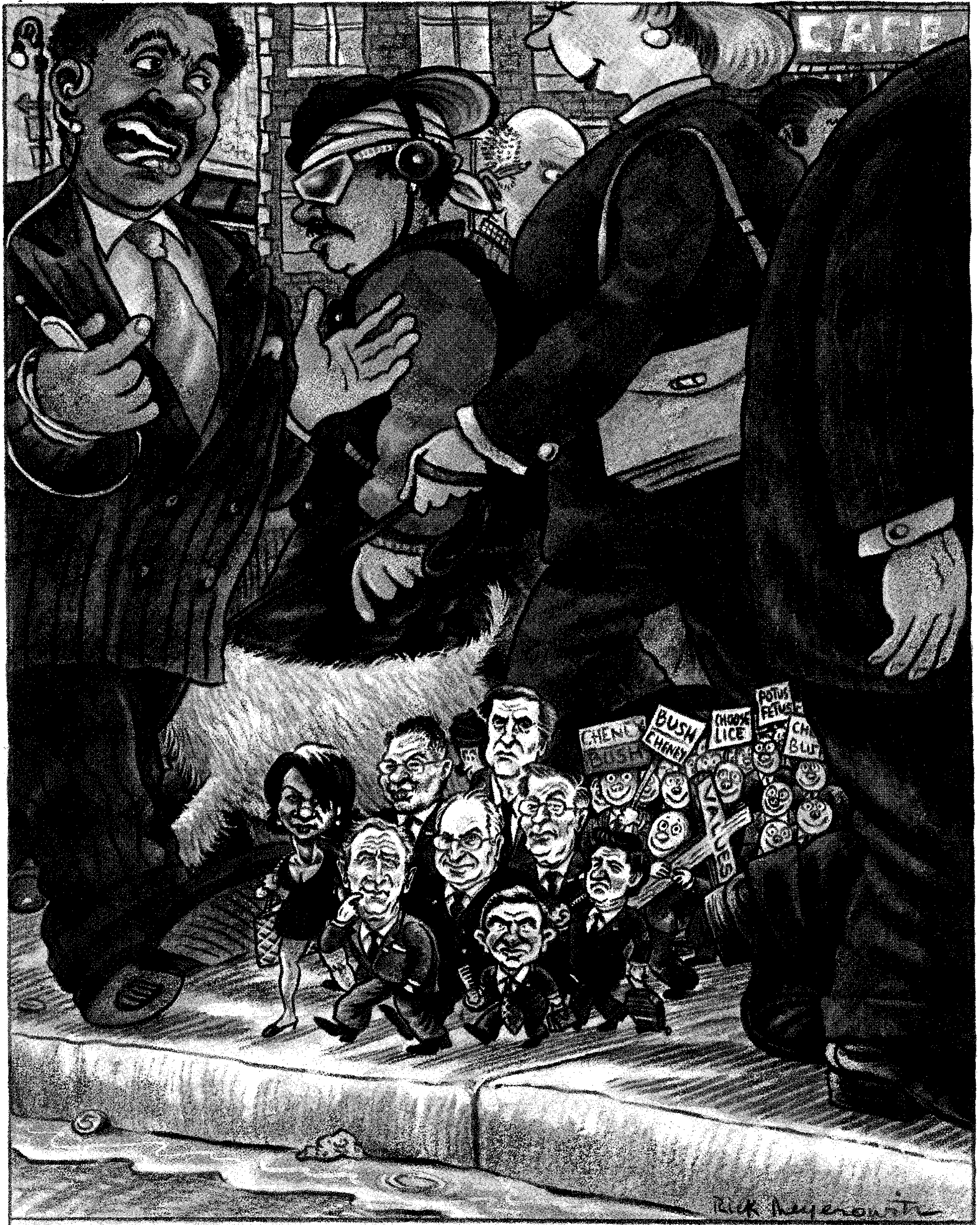
But this President does not admit error. When asked at a press conference whether he had ever made a mistake in office, he couldn't think of one.

If Bush wins in November, given this record of misfeasance, American democracy is in much greater trouble than even the most alienated citizens imagine. A President so out of step with the needs of Americans can only rule by sowing division and fear. Americans have one recourse: to ignore the costume ball in New York City and fire the worst President in modern history on November 2.

COMMENT

Damaged Goods

George W. Bush is damaged goods, but he has found his campaign voice—the forked tongue of the high road/low road politician. The lofty Commander in Chief will solemnly remind Americans of their fears, while his wicked twin tears viciously into John Kerry's flesh. When the Warrior President tries to sound like Churchill, he affects a peculiar Texas staccato. "We-must-be-strong. We-must-be-resolute-against-these-cold-blooded-killers." But the down-and-dirty Prez turns sly and sarcastic, inviting regular guys to share a belly laugh over Kerry's "nuances," while Bush's surrogates smear Kerry's Bronze Star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THE REPUBLICANS ARRIVE IN NEW YORK

Rick Meyerowitz

in Vietnam as phony. What's this wobbly peacenik talking about anyway? We're at war, remember. No time for lying, liberal sissies.

The Bush campaign strategy is already in play before the GOP convention. The President runs on fear and character assassination—big fear and big lies. While Bush's claims and insinuations are utterly distant from the truth, the strategy can't be dismissed, because Republicans are so experienced at this kind of politics. GOP marketing proceeds on a cynical assumption that voters can be moved by the brazen repetition of evocative falsehoods and broad-brush caricature. Their model is 1988, when Bush's daddy used the racist "Willie Horton" ads and "card-carrying member of the ACLU" to defenestrate Michael Dukakis, a decent and capable governor they turned into a national joke.

For big fear, Bush Junior has the federal government at his disposal, and he's using it to pump up anxieties. Does anyone think the "Ashcroft alert," based on old and murky material, was anything more than a thematic tuneup for the fall campaign? Nor was the White House necessarily upset by the headlines about FBI agents chasing after antiwar protesters who *might* be planning "violent" actions at the GOP convention. Anything that polarizes public opinion about unknown dangers is assumed to help Bush. Meantime, his war planners are suddenly escalating the "threat" rhetoric surrounding Iran and its nuclear bomb-making. Anything that changes the conversation from Iraq can be helpful too.

For personal slander, the Bush regime is hurling mud at Kerry's brightest armor—his sterling reputation as a decorated Vietnam War hero. The Swift Boat veterans attacking Kerry are clearly agents of the Republican machine—financed by Bush money boys and already exposed for multiple lies and distortions. The well-coordinated attack has produced a media tempest, but this is August, the doldrums between conventions, and we can't yet know how much real damage may be done.

What this farfetched smear demonstrates for sure, however, is the President's desperation. The man will do anything (didn't we already know that?). If Kerry is smart, he can turn this latest hit job into an excellent opportunity. Since Bush has raised the question of character and honesty, by all means let's talk about it. Kerry should open every speech with that line and then review the shameful evidence of Bush's mendacious character, from the fictitious threats from Iraq to the 5 million jobs his rich-guy tax cuts were going to produce for ordinary Americans. Which candidate trashes the truth? By all means let the election be decided on that question.

Despite the propaganda barrage, John Kerry seems to be holding his own. The most recent Gallup poll reported a slight improvement in the President's numbers but also found that Kerry is now more trusted to handle the war in Iraq by 48 percent, compared to 47 percent for Bush. That's a remarkable finding, given that effective war-making was supposed to be Bush's best and biggest card. Indeed, given the bloody muddle in Iraq, many Americans may be in the mood for more nuance in US foreign policy and less extremism from the White House.

This is not 1988. To begin with, trying to portray Kerry as a cowardly liar in Vietnam simply doesn't have the emotional resonance of Willie Horton, especially since Bush himself wimped out during that war. More to the point, Kerry is not playing passive, as Dukakis did, but counterpunching smartly, forcefully challenging Bush on the warrior's own turf. Kerry has even introduced the magic word people yearn to hear about Iraq—"withdrawal"—albeit in a backhanded way. Kerry's position is lathered in nuances, calling for an "enormous reduction" starting next year, but he is now positioned to express his idea loudly and often (and "responsibly," of course), if he finds the nerve to do so. A big if, alas. Bush can hardly win points by attacking "withdrawal." He tried to top Kerry by promising to bring US troops home from Europe and Asia, but that's another attempt to change the subject.

Kerry has also acquired an unusual asset—the neutrality of the major media. After playing compliant lapdog for the Warrior in Chief, the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* are now creating distance from their former hero and even challenging his distortions (both newspapers recently confessed institutional embarrassment for their go-to-war enthusiasm). At least the big media are not ridiculing Kerry as they did so freely with Al Gore in 2000 and Dukakis in 1988. Reporters and editors read the polls too. They know this incumbent President is in deep trouble. They can see his old moves are not working—not yet, anyway.

The core dynamic driving the 2004 campaign is this: George W. bet his presidency on two dubious, high-risk propositions, and he lost on both. First, he assumed that top-down tax cuts and other regressive, wealth-shifting measures would be sufficient to restore a prospering economy. Second, he decided after 9/11 to become the President of permanent war. As recently as nine months ago, this looked like a sure winner to the White House. Republican insiders assumed an easy re-election would be buoyed by the return of "good times" at home and patriotic fervor for triumph in Iraq. Wrong on both fronts.

When the opposite occurred, Bush was trapped by his own concocted image of Churchillian tough guy. It's too late to change, so Bush's best shot now is destroying Kerry. The President cannot acknowledge the disappointing results in Iraq or the struggling economy without diminishing himself. Plus, a lot of people have figured out that the man tells lies—big lies—or, worse, is not capable of handling hard facts and adjusting his policy accordingly.

In short, can people any longer trust this guy—not just on personal honesty, but his sense of judgment, his competence as President? That killer question is now stalking the Bush II regime. I discern (wishfully, perhaps) that the Kerry campaign understands that this contest will pivot on the public's declining trust in the President and is poking relentlessly at this vulnerability in different ways. I wish Kerry would put the attack more forcefully but, who knows, maybe he is right not to get

ON THE WEB

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"I have always been an optimist, convinced that determination, solidarity and foresight can lead to positive change even in the face of adversity. Today we need more active optimists committed to building a safer, fairer and healthier future. This new magazine encourages people to grasp the challenges of our times with both hands and take action."

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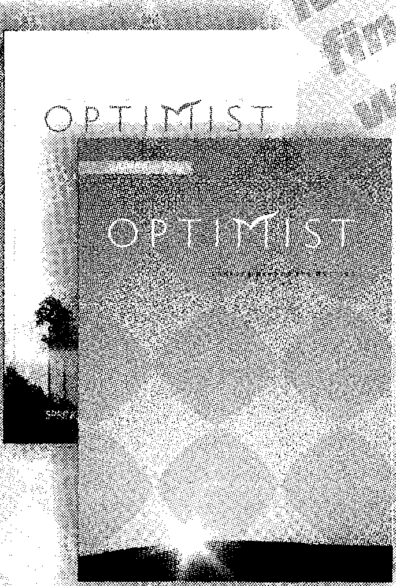

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too personal or, like Bush, hit below the belt.

The question of trust also threatens the right-wing agenda for governing. Bush's people assumed—correctly, it seemed—that an inert, alienated people would tolerate his conservative reforms, whacking away at long-established liberal government and social values, in deference to the popular war leader. But now the people are aroused and agitated by Bush's failures to deliver on his two big bets. He can still trot out the right-wing ideas again if he chooses—dismantling Social Security, taxing work and consumption instead of capital and corporations. But these radical propositions are burdened now by the same question: Can we believe anything this guy says? In any case, Bush's bizarre ideological convictions do not speak to what's on people's minds—the open-ended war and the faltering economy. Bush's great challenge is to divert people from the hard facts of his presidency and get them to focus on a set of fantastic smears of his challenger.

The intensity of this contest has put the Republic in fragile, possibly dangerous, circumstances. The Bush crowd is smart and skillful, and above all devious. They have demonstrated that to hold on to power, they will do anything. In the background chatter of Washington, a real worry is expressed that the White House might put the bombers aloft and strike somewhere in a supposed emergency—maybe take out Iran's nuclear program?—to change the subject big-time and to scare the bejeezus out of American voters just before the election.

Normally, I wouldn't take such talk seriously. But when I consider Bush's dilemma and all that's at stake, I begin to think these fears are not implausible. In a newly concocted crisis, would anxious Americans stampede to the President's side? Or would they see through the cynical charade and toss him out? I would bet on the latter, but I wouldn't bet the whole farm. WILLIAM GREIDER

The War on Dissent

When New York City was announced as the site of the Republican National Convention back in January 2003, it seemed an odd choice of location. The turf is staunchly Democratic, and Manhattan is so densely packed that conventioneers and protesters will inevitably clash. But the pageantry of George W. Bush returning to Ground Zero to trumpet his victories in the war on terrorism may have been too tempting for GOP media consultants to resist.

An unpopular war has since intervened, and today a majority of registered voters believe our nation is headed in the wrong direction. Bush needs a bounce from the convention and can ill afford the tarnish of being publicly charged by the September 11 families with having neglected terrorist threats while he has exploited their tragedy for his election bid. And surely he does not want the world to witness a quarter-million protesters demanding regime change in the United States, or to realize that opposition to his policies is so heartfelt that people have resolved as a matter of conscience to commit acts of nonviolent civil disobedience and subject themselves to criminal arrest and prosecution.

Fortunately for Bush—but unfortunately for our democracy—the FBI, in the period leading up to the RNC, has borrowed freely from J. Edgar Hoover's time-tested bag of tricks for stifling dissent by instilling fear. In mid-August, we learned that the FBI has visited at least six states and asked dozens of people whether they or others were planning acts of violence at this summer's party conventions and whether they understood that it is criminal to withhold information from the FBI. In addition, in July several people were subpoenaed to testify about their protest activities before a grand jury convened in Missouri. Concerned members of Congress have demanded a Justice Department investigation into whether the questioning of demonstrators constitutes "systematic political harassment and intimidation of legitimate antiwar protesters" and oversteps the bounds of the First Amendment.

We also learned in mid-August that the New York Police Department has identified dozens of "primary anarchists" and has assigned teams of six officers to trail each around the clock, and that as many as twenty NYPD officers have infiltrated protest groups for close to two years and are clandestinely reporting on the groups' convention plans. On top of these unsettling accounts come the Department of Homeland Security's warning of the potential for terrorism and District Attorney Robert Morgenthau's announcement that the Manhattan criminal justice machinery is cranked up to process 1,000 arrests a day.

If police behavior during recent antiwar and antiglobalization demonstrations is any guide, those who refuse to bow to intimidation and participate in the RNC protests must come prepared to struggle to make their voices heard. To an increased degree, these demonstrations have been characterized by pre-emptive arrests of lawful protesters, the penning of demonstrators inside caged protest zones and the unnecessary use of aggressive crowd control techniques that have caused injuries.

Mayor Bloomberg may be offering shopping discounts to "peaceful" RNC protesters, but his actions show that he would prefer to keep protest unseen and unheard. When United for Peace and Justice applied for a permit to hold a demonstration in Central Park on the day before the RNC opening, the city, citing the prospect of damage to the grass, denied the application and offered instead a remote site. The group refused it and sought an injunction permitting their demonstration to go forward in Central Park, which was denied. At press time, an appeal was under discussion.

The First Amendment has never given us more than we have demanded of it. It lay dormant for more than a century, until peace activists, suffragists and labor leaders of the teens, twenties and thirties breathed life into its words with their fiery speeches and broadsides. Our nation is once again at a critical juncture. In the name of national security, the executive branch has assumed unprecedented new powers that it is exercising largely in secret. It is incumbent upon us to stand as a check against the abuse of these powers to preserve our democracy.

Let us hope the RNC protests are spirited and that officials live up to their constitutional obligations. When the whole world is watching, may it see democracy in action. NANCY CHANG

Nancy Chang, senior litigation attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights in New York City, is the author of Silencing Political Dissent: How Post–September 11 Anti-Terrorism Measures Threaten Our Civil Liberties. *CCR represents United for Peace and Justice in its permit lawsuit.*

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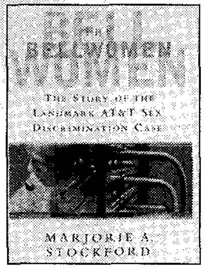
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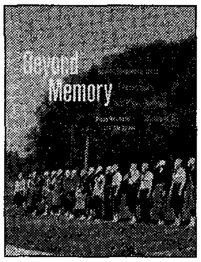
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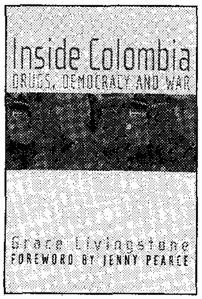
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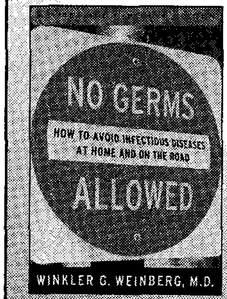
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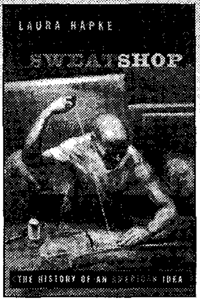
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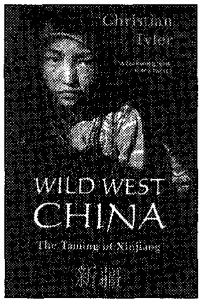
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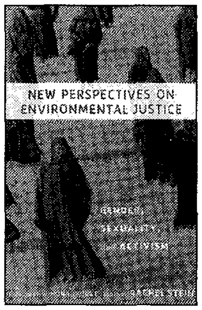
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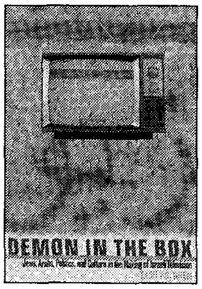
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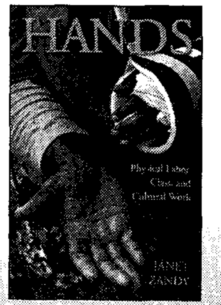
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Billboard Barons

It was a bomb that started the whole thing—an image of one anyway. A nationwide controversy erupted in July after Clear Channel Communications, one of the country's largest outdoor advertisers, refused to run an antiwar ad paid for by Project Billboard, a Berkeley, California–based nonprofit. The ad, which was supposed to appear on a billboard over Times Square during the Republican National Convention, featured an image of a bomb and the slogan "Democracy is best taught by example, not by war." Clear Channel said New York, in the aftermath of 9/11, is no place for a bomb image. Project Billboard sued for breach of contract. Critics accused Clear Channel of political censorship, equating the incident with the company's decision to fire shock jock Howard Stern after he repeatedly criticized the Bush Administration.

The two sides eventually settled, and Clear Channel is now running the ad, although with a dove replacing the bomb. But the billboard flap raises lingering questions about Clear Channel's control over outdoor advertising, a little-studied but important dimension of its media empire.

Billboards were the object of public derision for most of the twentieth century, particularly since the 1960s, when a national movement emerged to fight their proliferation along scenic highways. Nonetheless, in the past twenty years the outdoor advertising industry has become a multibillion-dollar behemoth, evolving from basic highway signage to more than 1 million multimedia displays targeting consumers in trains, buses, taxis, schools, airports, shopping malls, concert venues and stadiums. The growth spurt, which accelerated between 1996 and 2000, has followed a pattern of consolidation similar to other media. Just three companies now dominate the landscape: Viacom, the already bloated media empire; Clear Channel, the largest owner of radio stations in the United States; and Lamar Advertising, an advertising-only company that acquired 538 outdoor advertising companies beginning in 1997.

Outdoor advertising, unlike other forms of media, is not regulated by the Federal Communications Commission. Instead the task falls to the antitrust division of the Justice Department, which enforces general guidelines over market control and ownership. But critics say the department has not done enough to stop consolidation. "They do not appear, for whatever reason, to be acting in connection with outdoor advertising," says William Brinton, an attorney on the board of Citizens for Scenic Florida, a billboard watchdog group based in Jacksonville. "Watching the consolidation over the past six years, I once mused about taking out an ad in the [*New York Times*] under 'Lost and Found' and inquiring if anyone has seen anyone from the Antitrust Department," Brinton writes in an e-mail. To date, no Congressional legislation has been introduced to address consolidation in the industry.

The Big Three now control anywhere from 50 to 75 percent of the entire industry, according to some estimates. In San Francisco, Clear Channel and Viacom together control about 90 percent of the outdoor advertising space. The Big Three also raked in 85 percent of the $5.5 billion spent on outdoor advertising in 2003, with Viacom grabbing $1.7 billion, Clear Channel $2.17 billion, and Lamar $810 million. Clear Channel's share alone accounted for nearly 40 percent of all sales, making it the industry leader for that year. The company boasts that its displays, which total more than 150,000 in the United States, can reach over half of the total population, 75 percent of the Latino population, and seven out of every ten airline travelers. Clear Channel displays appear in every major US city, with more than 11,000 in New York City alone, where the company owns more than half of all the billboards in Times Square.

Industry officials say consolidation promotes competition and creativity. But critics say massive proliferation, coupled with oligarchic ownership, is destroying the diversity of local communities. "They homogenize, just like fast-food operations when they all look alike from place to place. There's a sense that you could be anywhere," says Meg Maguire, president of Scenic America, a Washington, DC–based nonprofit that tracks billboard proliferation. Concentration in the industry also has potentially deleterious effects on civic discourse and diversity of opinion, media critics say. "The more space they take up, the more cultural and social influence they wield," says Mark Crispin Miller, a professor of media ecology at New York University. "And if [the companies] are, for example, very close to the government, they function as a de facto propaganda machine for that government. That's neither culturally advantageous, nor is it healthy in any civic sense."

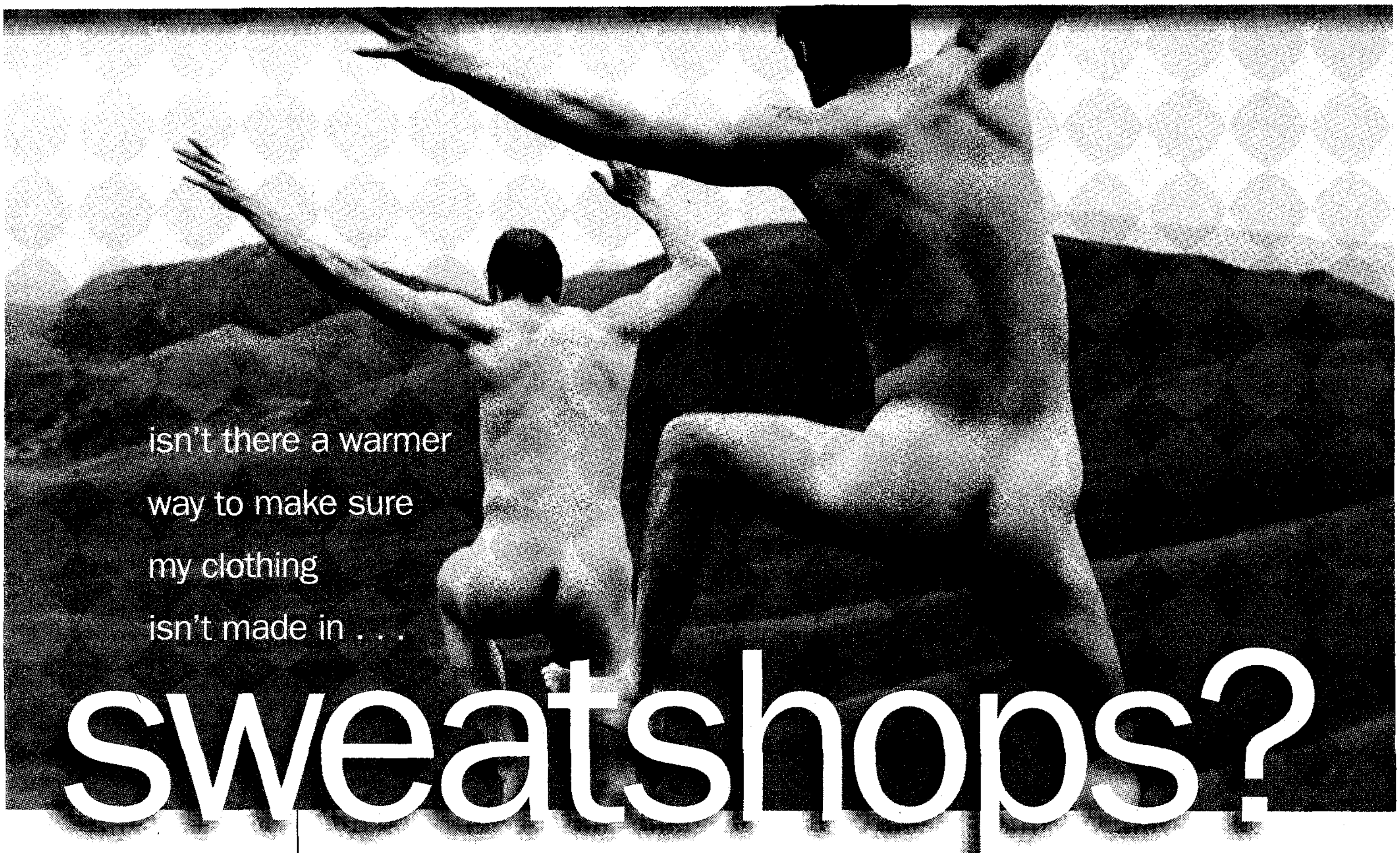
Outdoor advertising currently represents only 2.6 percent of total US advertising expenditures, compared with nearly 75 percent for newspapers, television and radio combined. But in some ways, as Clear Channel Outdoor likes to boast, outdoor ads have a more powerful impact: "Outdoor is great because you can't turn it off, throw it away or click on the next page. That means your message is reaching consumers everywhere—all the time, every day." Yikes. DAVID MONTERO

David Montero, a former Nation *intern, has written for* Mother Jones, *the Center for Investigative Reporting,* PBS FRONTLINE/World *and others.*

Patriot at the Bat

Just as Roger Clemens can be counted on to fire heat, our national pastime inevitably waves the flag in times of national stress. After 9/11, Bud Selig, the commissioner of Major League Baseball, decided that the traditional pregame singing of "The Star-Spangled Banner" did not reflect sufficient patriotic fervor and decreed that "God Bless America" also be sung at each game. At the outset, almost all teams complied, usually during the seventh-inning stretch, with players due to bat giving voice while standing on the dugout steps.

For many months now, Carlos Delgado, the star first baseman of the Toronto Blue Jays, has protested the US invasion of Iraq by quietly refusing to appear in chorus with his teammates. "I think it's the stupidest war ever," he told the *Toronto Star* not long ago. "Who are you fighting against? You're just getting ambushed now. We have more people dead now after the war [was officially declared over], than during the war. You've been looking for weapons of mass destruction. Where a joint project of GLOBAL EXCHANGE Co-op America



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are they at? Can't find them.... It's just stupid."

Delgado's antiwar anger is rooted in his native Puerto Rico, where for six decades the US Navy tested myriad weapons by bombing the small island of Vieques off the country's eastern coast. Large portions of the island are now off-limits because of unexploded shells, and the bombing's widespread contamination is suspected of causing abnormally high cancer rates among the local population. In 1999 an errant bomb killed a civilian on Vieques, and Delgado, then in his sixth year as a Blue Jay, got involved, along with many other outraged Puerto Ricans. He has since donated some $100,000 to communities and activists on Vieques and, in April 2001, together with singer Ricky Martin and boxer Felix Trinidad, took out full-page ads in the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* protesting the bombing. "Sometimes you've just got to break the mold," Delgado says. "You've got to push it a little bit or else you can't get anything done." In May of last year, the Navy finally ended its sixty-year bombing run.

Delgado's unobtrusive, dignified protest against the war in Iraq has drawn predictable howls from right-wing sports fans, like former NFL lineman Bill Maas, who on his Kansas City radio show labeled the first baseman "un-American" and hypocritical because he refuses to stand and sing but remains willing to accept his $18 million–plus annual salary. On one baseball forum, a fan wrote that Delgado's protest "makes [him] a terrorist and he should be jailed." Happily, these seem to be minority views, and it may indicate progress of a sort that, so far at least, the 32-year-old Delgado doesn't appear to face the kind of treatment sports stars of the past have encountered when they dared march out of step: See Muhammad Ali, who was stripped of his heavyweight title in the 1960s for refusing to serve in Vietnam; see Craig Hodges, who was banished from the National Basketball Association after he protested Gulf War I when he and his Chicago Bulls teammates visited the White House in 1991; see Mahmoud Abdul-Rauf of the Denver Nuggets, who suffered a similar fate at the hands of the NBA after refusing to stand for "The Star-Spangled Banner" in 1996.

There are some 750 players on Major League Baseball's thirty teams, and scores more managers, coaches, umpires and front-office executives. It is fair to assume that a significant number of them also think the war in Iraq is stupid, or at the very least a dubious enterprise. Yet they remain silent, as members of the professional sports establishment almost always do once they're told by the commish or team owners to fall into line [see Kelly Candaele and Peter Dreier, "Where Are the Jocks for Justice?" June 28]. The Blue Jays and a few others teams have stopped playing "God Bless America," and most other teams now play the song only on Sundays, holidays and on special event days like the All-Star Game. George Steinbrenner, though, has ordered that the song be sung during the seventh-inning stretch at all games at Yankee Stadium, where Delgado was greeted by a smattering of boos when the Blue Jays came to town recently.

No less an American than Irving Berlin has a message for such "patriots." In 1938 he dusted off "God Bless America," which he had found wanting when he composed it two decades before. With Hitler on the march in Europe, he thought it somehow might now serve as a plea for peace. One of his original lines went: "Make her victorious on land and foam, God bless America, my home sweet home." He didn't want the tune to be a war song, so he altered the melody and changed the line to "From the mountains to the prairies to the oceans white with foam..." Carlos Delgado seems to understand what Berlin had in mind. RICHARD POLLAK

Richard Pollak, a Nation *contributing editor, is the author, most recently, of* The Colombo Bay, *a book about his voyage on a container ship in the weeks after 9/11.*

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—Colin Powell on the Vietnam War, in My American Journey

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I partied right at home; my record was unmarred.
I used my daddy's clout to hide out in the Guard.

John Kerry's well-connected, as you know.
But, like a sucker, he signed up to go.
So, though I wear my flight suit and I primp,
His medals made me seem to be a wimp.
While he was in a boat that Charlie could bombard,
I used my daddy's clout to hide out in the Guard.

So Rove, sub rosa, managed to unchain
The sort of creeps who smeared my friend McCain.
With coverage that soon becomes intensive,
The valor's smudged, the hero turns defensive.
And voters soon forget why I emerged unscarred:
I used my daddy's clout to hide out in the Guard.

---

* They say I skipped about a year of meetings,
For which I've faced my only kind of flak.
If you can find my records of that period,
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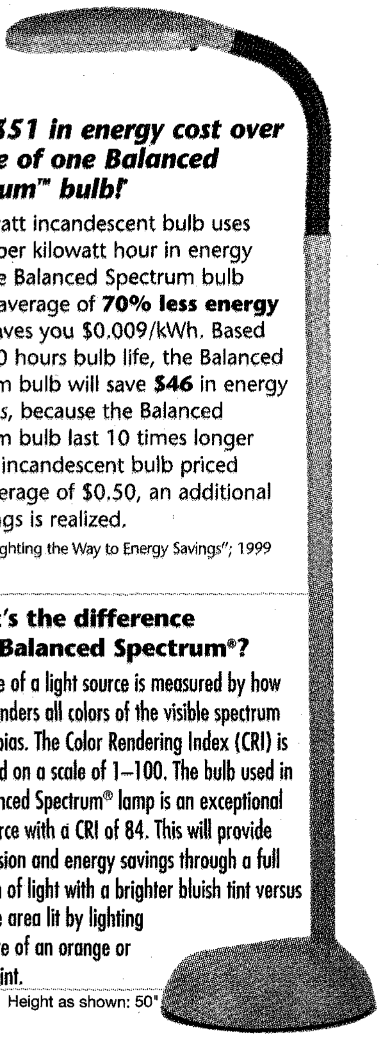

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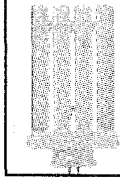

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Visitors enter through the imposing three-foot-thick Rumsfeld Memorial Bronze Doors, inlaid with scenes of George W. Bush's Ten Most Statesmanlike Moments. Once inside, visitors are escorted to the John Ashcroft Lounge for interrogation and full orifice search. After screening they may proceed to the Great Hall, where two large dioramas are displayed: "Mission Accomplished: George W. Bush Bringing Democracy to a Grateful Iraqi People" and "Mission Accomplished: George W. Bush Bringing Tax Relief to Grateful Billionaires." In the rear will be the Wall of Fame, on which are prominently displayed the names or corporate logos of $5 million donors to the Library.

After climbing the sweeping marble staircase, the visitor enters Energy Hall (a gift of the Exxon-Mobil Foundation). In this vast room will be exhibited memorabilia central to the career of George W. Bush, such as the bottle of Jack Daniel's from which Mr. Bush had his last drink; the copy of "The Pet Goat" the President was reading to schoolchildren when notified of the attack on the World Trade Center with annotations on how to pronounce certain words; the Nautilus machine on which Mr. Bush had daily workouts during the run-up to the Iraq war.

Next stop is the Higher Father Chapel. Note the stained-glass windows depicting *The Passion of the Christ: The Movie* (a gift of Mel Gibson). Behind the bullet-proof glass door is the Presidential Archive, housing personal state papers (© 2004 George W. Bush All Rights Reserved), as well as those of George H.W. Bush. These will be stored in a giant time capsule made of especially hardened titanium steel, which will remain sealed until the year 2104.

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RICHARD LINGEMAN

This piece first appeared in different form in Billionaires for Bush: How to Rule the World for Fun and Profit *(Thunder's Mouth Press).*

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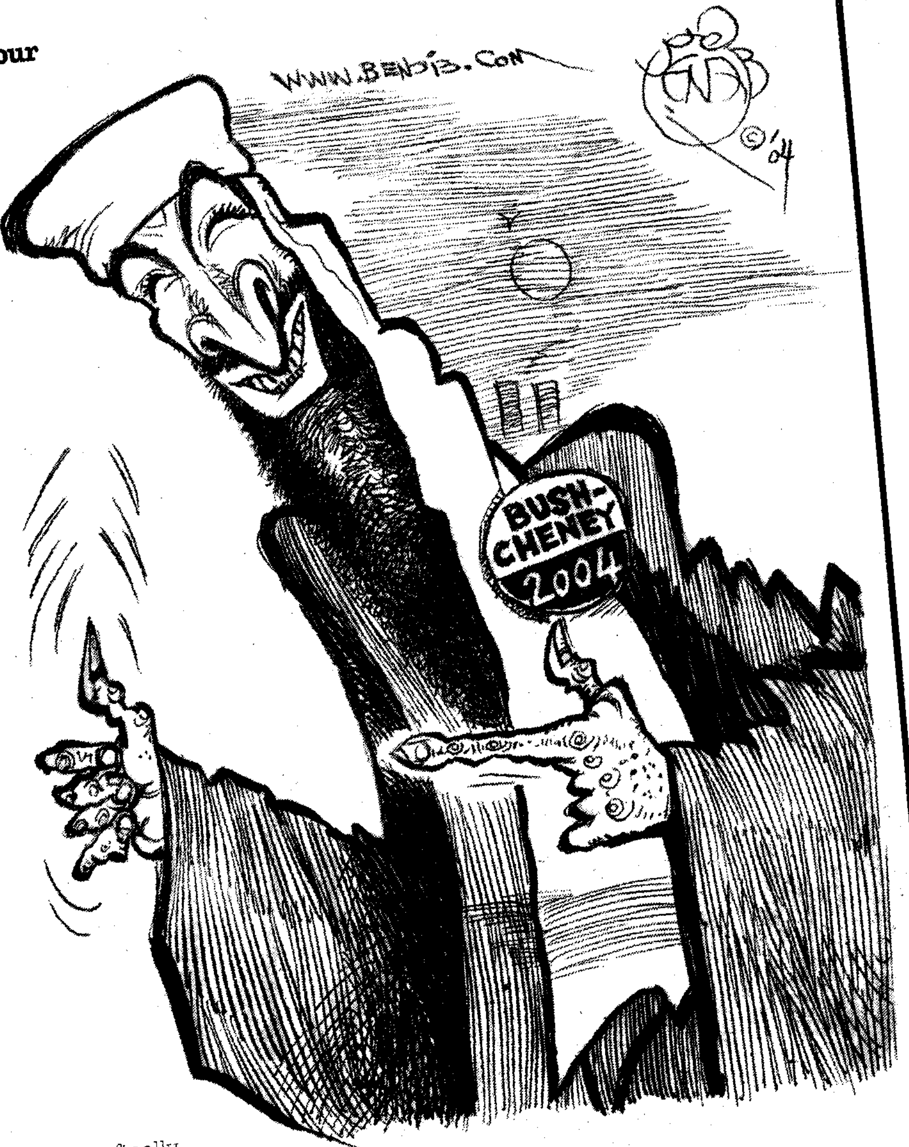

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Osama

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JONATHAN SCHELL

Imperialism Without Empire

Is the United States—as so many have said, in celebration or dismay—a planet-mastering empire or not? The question presses upon us as George W. Bush gets ready to descend upon New York for the Republican convention, as he once descended upon the aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln under the banner declaring "mission accomplished" in Iraq.

Just as the President's landing on the Lincoln invited an assessment of the Iraq war, so now his visit to New York invites assessment of the larger, global mission of the Administration. (And, come to think of it, Manhattan island, with its slim uptown and its broad-beamed downtown, is shaped rather like a gargantuan aircraft carrier.) The decision to hold the convention in New York City was apparently conceived as a triumphal return by the nation's savior to the scene of September 11. But the recent fortunes of the United States have been anything but triumphal. The President's policies have failed to check the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. The entire "axis of evil," consisting, according to the President, of Iraq, Iran and North Korea, continues to defy his Administration in one way or another. In Iraq, the Marines are now at war with the Shiite community the United States supposedly came to save. North Korea has allegedly become a nuclear power, and Iran seems to be heading that way. The traditional alliances of the United States have been shaken. After 9/11, editorialists asked, "Why do they hate us?" Whatever the reasons, "they" have multiplied to include most of the world.

In the face of so much failure, I wrote recently to my book editor and friend Tom Engelhardt, America's title to global empire seems at the very least in question. (This column does double duty as the third in an exchange of letters on the subject between me and Engelhardt at his superb website, tomdispatch.com, sponsored by the Nation Institute. The earlier letters can be read at the website under the August 2004 posts.) Engelhardt responded with an eloquent list of America's imperial assets, including, among other items, its 700-plus military bases, its supine Congress, its nearly half-trillion-dollar military establishment, its division of earth into five military commands, its ambition to dominate space and its militarized political parties.

So the answer to the question, "Is the United States a global imperial power?" must be an unequivocal yes. However, if the question is shifted very slightly, and we ask, "Is the United States a global empire?" the answer is less obvious. Bush's America plainly has global imperial ambition, but does it have the corresponding accomplishment?

Perhaps the question can be better addressed by dividing it into two parts: first, whether the United States has the wherewithal to play an imperial role, and, second, whether the world is ready to receive American imperial direction. Clearly, the world's will to resist is as notable as the US will to impose itself. It's sometimes said that America is militarily strong but politically weak (and economically in a gray zone). Yet even the extent of US military strength, often called unchallengeable, is open to question. The United States definitely has the largest heap of weaponry on the planet. But if, as the remarkable American failure to have its way with the "axis" countries suggests, that military punch cannot produce the desired results, then is it correct to speak so confidently of unlimited military "strength"?

Or is there, as I believe, something in the very fabric of today's world that tends to resist or elude or otherwise negate the operation of military force and, with it, imperial subjugation? Has "military strength" itself become weak? At the pinnacle of the global system, where the great powers face one another, conventional military superiority is stalemated by nuclear arms, already possessed by nine nations. The United States styles itself the sole superpower, but if push comes to shove can it defeat nuclear-armed China or Russia? The paralyzing, equalizing power conferred by nuclear arsenals goes unremarked on in our supposedly "unipolar" world (as if the influence of nuclear arms had simply disappeared with the end of the cold war), because no acute conflict among the larger powers forces it on our attention. But as soon as a crisis arises, the fiction of unipolarity, even on the strictly military level, will become obvious. The confrontation with North Korea has already been instructive in this respect. That country's putative possession of just a few nuclear weapons (along with its considerable conventional forces) has probably been enough to deter the sole superpower from attacking it.

The other, equally great, barrier to imperial expansion, acting at the base of the global system, is the ferocious resistance mounted by local populations. In the twentieth century, the peoples of the earth insisted on taking charge of their own countries. Their rebellions were successful against all empires, from the British to the Soviet, every one of which has fallen.

In the face of nuclear stalemate at the apex of the global system and universal rebellion at the base, can any imperial project now succeed? What we may in fact be witnessing is not just a contest between an American empire and its particular colonial targets but a final showdown between the imperial idea and what I like to call an unconquerable world, meaning a world that has the will and the means to reject any imperial yoke.

Is the United States possibly an imperial power that does not quite possess an empire? Is the American "empire" a colossal leftover from a vanishing age?

Let us admit, however, that the sudden popularity of global imperial ambition in the United States is not due entirely to arrogance and lust for power, evident as these are. It is also a response, however perverse, to requirements of the time that even the antagonists of empire will acknowledge are inescapable. The earth is fragile, and the earth is becoming one—economically, ecologically and digitally. A global politics to deal with both conditions is required, and the idea of empire, especially of global empire, offers the most familiar answer, historically speaking, to this need. That it is a desperately wrong answer is shown by the sweeping failure of the Bush policies. But defeating the Bush Administration will not be enough. The need for a truly global politics—a need that, in part, called forth America's misbegotten empire—must be met.

Jonathan Schell is the Harold Willens Peace Fellow at the Nation Institute.

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ALEXANDER COCKBURN

Zombies for Kerry

BEAT THE
DEVIL

Didn't John Kerry ever read about rope-a-dope? Karl Rove must be kicking his heels with merriment at the way the horse-faced son of Boston is tangling himself up in the Swift Boat comedy. A couple of weeks more and I reckon Kerry will start crying on TV at the besmirchments of his war record, and it will all be over.

Are there any skins thinner than those belonging to Democratic Loyalists for Kerry? The other night Jeffrey St. Clair, who co-edits the political website and newsletter *CounterPunch* with yours truly, found himself to a gathering of antiwar activists in downtown Portland, Oregon, touting our new book, *Dime's Worth of Difference: Beyond the Lesser of Two Evils.* There were about a hundred souls assembled, and Jeffrey's seasoned eye assayed the political temper of the throng. Sure enough, at least a score had that fixity of gaze and tensed naso-labial musculature that betrayed the presence of Zombies for Kerry.

Jeffrey plunged into his talk, an evenhanded assault on both Bush and Kerry. First he whaled away at Bush, tracing the shameful decline of this war resister from the moral Everest of his Quaker-like refusal to spill Vietnamese blood (or his own) to his latter-day militarist posturing and use of the National Guard as a de facto draft, with the draftees press-ganged into indentured servitude by stop-loss orders, now under court challenge.

Then Jeffrey turned his spotlight on Kerry's record in Vietnam and began to review the unpleasing record of unmerited Purple Hearts and Silver Star, plus those actions of Lieutenant Kerry that could arguably be classified as war crimes. At this point a lady of middle years, the leader of the Kerry loyalists, rose in indignation and, after a whispered and vehement colloquy with the organizer of the event, led her troops, perhaps a dozen in number, haughtily from the hall.

I've no way of knowing, but it's quite possible that among those protesters were several, maybe many, who were passionately opposed to the war in Vietnam, and themselves denounced it as fifteen years of war crimes against the Vietnamese people. Yet here they were, so deeply committed to voting for Kerry that they could not even bear to hear a discussion of his conduct in Vietnam, let alone sit still for a reasoned discussion of Kerry's pledges to keep the troops in Iraq.

The calculation in the Kerry camp is obviously that the liberal-progressive part of their base will put up with anything, and they seem to be correct in making that assumption. Last weekend one of Kerry's aides took the opportunity, in a debate on CNN, to emphasize that Kerry supported "96 percent" of the Patriot Act and indeed wrote some of the language of the act.

Kerry announces that even if he'd known the allegations of Saddam Hussein's WMDs were spurious, he'd have voted to authorize war on Iraq. There's scarcely a quiver in the ABB loyalists. Kerry was backing Bush's attack on Iraq at the same moment that Republican Representative Doug Bereuter of Nebraska (No. 2 on the House Intelligence Committee) said the attack was unjustified, while Republican Representative Jim Leach of Iowa, twenty-eight years on the Hill, was calling for the United States to get out by the end of the year.

Such criticism on the Democratic side was virtually inaudible. I've heard only Robert Byrd and Russell Feingold publicly criticizing Kerry's stance on the war in recent days. After argument with an ABB-er the other day, I asked him about his long-term political perspective. Here he was beating the drum for a man who stands for everything he opposes: war in Iraq, war in Colombia, war on drugs, war on the deficit, war on teen morals. Oh, he said, the day after we elect John Kerry we'll go to war on him. Yeah, right! Back in the early and middle 1990s the liberals and progressives were exactly as indulgent to Clinton as they are to Kerry now. After almost four years of Clinton, Washington's liberal advocacy groups, foundations and public-interest networks resembled the Vichy French after six years of Nazi occupation.

Pressed for explanations for their pusillanimity, the liberal advocates explained that the Republican hordes who swept into Congress in 1994 were so barbaric, as was the prospect of a Dole presidency, that they had no choice but to circle the wagons round Bill Clinton.

So the Democratic Party, from DLC governors to liberal public-interest groups, mustered around their leader and marched into the late 1990s arm in arm along the path sign-posted toward the greatest orgy of corporate theft in the history of the planet, deregulation of banking and food safety, NAFTA and the WTO, rates of logging six times those achieved in the subsequent Bush years, oil drilling in the Arctic, a war on Yugoslavia, Plan Colombia, a vast expansion of the death penalty, reaffirmation of racist drug laws, the foundations of the Patriot Act.

The serious rebellion took place in the streets, in Seattle at the end of 1999, and the insurgents most certainly didn't come from the progressive/liberal wing of the Democratic Party.

There's a strong case for arguing that the importance of these presidential contests is disastrously exaggerated. As always, a monocular obsession with getting behind the Democratic nominee means quitting vital battlefields. In the 1996 and 2000 campaigns the AFL-CIO pulled many of its field organizers off its issue campaigns to work for Clinton and Gore, the very architects of the agreements that these labor organizers had spent the previous three years fighting.

Only weeks ago Andy Stern, head of the SEIU, blurted out to Dave Broder of the *Washington Post* that a Kerry victory might well demobilize labor. He had a strong point, even though he swiftly recanted. Now we see Stern sending his SEIU organizers out across Oregon in an effort to keep Nader off the ballot, who's done a lot more for SEIU members in substantive terms than Kerry ever has or will.

Rope-a-dope can mean tiring out your opponent. It can also mean getting your brains beaten in, and shuffling along as a Zombie. ■

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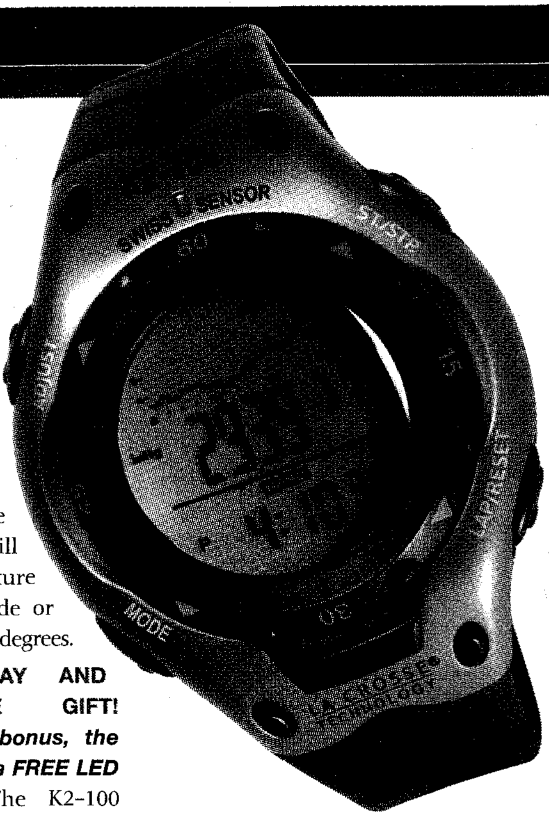

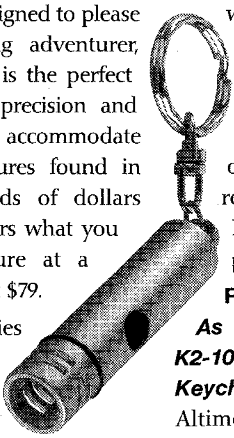

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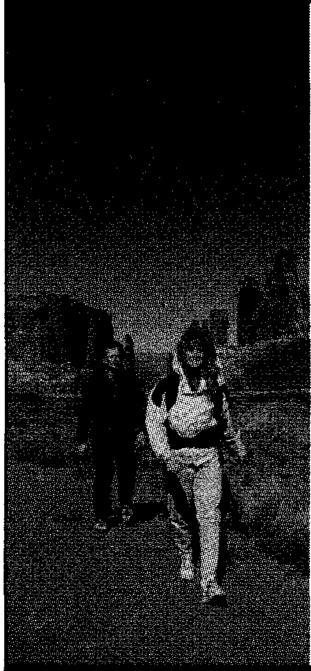

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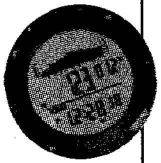

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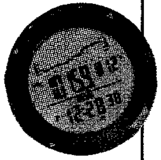

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KATHA POLLITT

Bush Bashers & the Bashers Who Bash Them

SUBJECT to DEBATE

For well over a decade now, right-wingers and Republicans have heaped insult, lies and slander on liberals and Democrats, who responded for the most part by becoming starchy, self-doubting and depressed. To complain was to be labeled elitist and fuddy-duddy: Rush and Ann and Bill and Sean say liberals are traitors and hate America? They're populist entertainers! Jerry Falwell hawked a video accusing Bill Clinton of murder? Shut up and finish your latte. It took ages, not to mention a suspect election and a suspect war, but suddenly everywhere you look Democrats and liberals are fighting back.

The prissy and thin-lipped are cracking jokes, policy wonks are gabbing on Air America, voters once proud of being as unherdable as cats leap aboard the projects of MoveOn.org and write checks to long-shot red-state candidates because Howard Dean says it's a good idea. Do some of these newborn activists feel an intense personal dislike of Bush and all his works? Think he's a blithering idiot? Quiver with rage and loathing when they watch him flash that arrogant sneer and speak in that weird lurching way, as if he's on the edge of blanking out totally? Sure. Probably some of them even enjoy seeing his features merged with an ape's on smirkingchimp.com. But so what? This is America, where pundits have for years reassured us politics is a down-and-dirty contact sport with no room for girly men.

Bush hatred wasn't supposed to happen. Liberals were supposed to be lofty and wistful and clueless, even as their enemies slimed them into irrelevance; they were supposed to say things like "Have you no sense of decency, sir?"—not cram into movie theaters to laugh hysterically at the President sitting in that classroom reading "The Pet Goat." Something must be wrong with these Bush-haters, with their NO MORE YEARS bumper stickers and their obsessional blogs—could they be insane? "Monomaniacal," as Tucker Carlson put it on *Crossfire*: "Their hatred has become the focus of their lives. It's actually a clinical description."

In *The New York Times Book Review*, Leon Wieseltier uses his review of Nicholson Baker's thin, sensationalistic novella *Checkpoint*, about a man holed up in a hotel with fantasies of assassinating the President, to deliver a long, sanctimonious lecture to the anti-Bush crowd: "The virulence that calls itself critical thinking, the merry diabolization of other opinions and the other people who hold them, the confusion of rightness with righteousness, the preference for aspersion to argument, the view that the strongest statement is the truest statement—these deformations of political discourse now thrive in the houses of liberalism too. The radicalism of the right has hectored into being a radicalism of the left. The Bush-loving mob is being met with a Bush-hating mob.... American liberalism, in sum, may be losing its head." Wieseltier sees "signs of the degradation...everywhere": Janet Malcolm wrote a letter to the *Times* in which she claimed the present moment is "as fearful as the period after Munich"; an anti-Bush anthology is decorated with anagrams like "The Republicans: Plan butcheries?"; MoveOn publishes an ad—a "huge" ad—that reads "The communists had *Pravda*. Republicans have Fox." Liberalism, it would seem, is supposed to consist of constantly reminding ourselves that we do not live in a murderous totalitarian regime. Things could be worse! This too shall pass!

Actually, I too bridle when people start talking about Hitler. It sounds naïve and overwrought. If the Republicans really were Nazis, you wouldn't be holding this magazine in your hands. And I don't like the endless theme of Bush's stupidity, either—it's mostly a way for the marginalized to feel culturally superior. I don't even believe that Bush is so dumb—he seems to have plenty of political cunning and skill, and that's a kind of intelligence, albeit not the kind that has much relation to making good policy decisions in a complex and dangerous world. On the *Times* op-ed page, Dahlia Lithwick made some good points about the impulse to portray Bush as a child: It insults people who voted for him in 2000 and whom we hope are persuadable this time, and it lets him off the hook, since children aren't responsible for the damage they cause.

And yet there is a schoolmasterish quality to all this finger-wagging. What are we talking about here? Some over-the-top e-mails? Whoopi Goldberg's off-color jokes? Nicholson Baker's novel has the obsessive-compulsive look-at-me creepiness of all his fiction, but surely it's *LA Times* book reviewer P.J. O'Rourke who has the problem when he compares its characters' dismay at suburban sprawl to the hatred of humanity that fuels Robespierre and Pol Pot. Is it anti-humanity to wish for more trees? Imagining characters named "Ann Coulter" and "Bill O'Reilly" up in that hotel room, he writes, "Hmmm, they don't appear to be discussing whether to kill Bill Clinton." Well, maybe not in the novel in O'Rourke's head—but in real life, Nicholson Baker's would-be assassin doesn't exist, while Ann Coulter has called for the murder of Islamic heads of state, the invasion of their countries, the forced conversion of their citizens to Christianity, the execution of liberals and a terrorist attack on the *New York Times*. Hilarious, I know.

It's really a stretch to suggest that the newly awakened anti-Bush advocates are just the lefty equivalent of the hard-right disinformation machine. Al Franken is no Bill O'Reilly. The *New York Times* editorial page equates MoveOn PAC's ads with those of the Swift Boat Veterans for Truth, and it's true both are funded through gaps in campaign-finance laws, and both attack the enemy candidate on his war record. But the Swift Boat vets' charges are a mess of smears and lies with Karl Rove's fingerprints all over them, while MoveOn's ads raise genuine questions about Bush's service record that have never been answered.

One group protesting at the Republican convention is planning to hand out 3,000 fortune cookies with messages like "Do not change horses midstream unless horse lies to you and stream is on fire," and lists of ways Bush has mispronounced "Abu Ghraib." You can be sure the Republicans will portray these mild jabs as demonic howls of rage and fury.

Where's their sense of humor? ■

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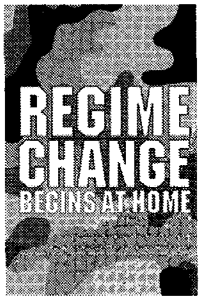

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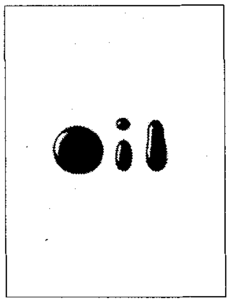

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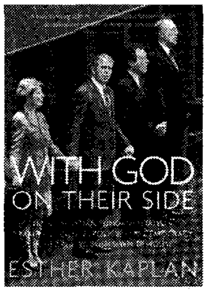

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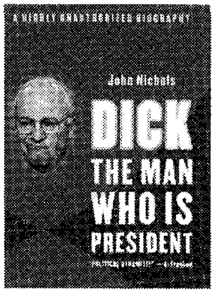

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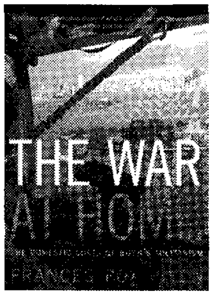

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NAOMI KLEIN

Bring Najaf to New York

I've been in New York a week now, watching the city prepare for the Republican National Convention and the accompanying protests. Much is predictable: tabloid hysteria about an anarchist siege; cops showing off their new crowd-control toys; fierce debates about whether the demonstrations will hurt the Republicans or inadvertently help them.

What surprises me is what isn't here: Najaf. It's nowhere to be found. Every day, US bombs and tanks move closer to the sacred Imam Ali Shrine, reportedly damaging outer walls and sending shrapnel flying into the courtyard; every day, children are killed in their homes as US soldiers inflict collective punishment on the holy city; every day, more bodies are disturbed as US Marines stomp through the Valley of Peace cemetery, their boots slipping into graves as they use tombstones for cover.

Sure, the fighting in Najaf makes the news, but not in any way connected to the election. Instead it's relegated to the status of a faraway intractable ethnic conflict, like Afghanistan, Sudan or Palestine. Even within the antiwar movement, the events in Najaf are barely visible. The "handover" has worked: Iraq is becoming somebody else's problem. It's true that war is at the center of the election campaign—just not the one in Iraq. The talk is all of what happened on Swift Boats thirty-five years ago, not of the cannons being fired from US AC-130 gunships this week.

But while Vietnam has taken up far too much space in this campaign already, I find myself thinking about the words of Vietnam veteran and novelist Tim O'Brien. In an interview for the 1980 documentary *Vietnam: The 10,000 Day War*, O'Brien said, "My time in Vietnam is a memory of ignorance and I mean utter ignorance. I didn't know the language. I couldn't communicate with the Vietnamese except in pidgin English. I knew nothing about the culture of Vietnam. I knew nothing about the religion, religions. I knew nothing about the village community. I knew nothing about the aims of the people, whether they were for the war or against the war.... No knowledge of what the enemy was after.... and I compensated for that ignorance in a whole bunch of ways, some evil ways. Blowing things up, burning huts as a frustration of being ignorant and not knowing where the enemy was."

He could have been talking about Iraq today. When a foreign army invades a country about which it knows virtually nothing, there is plenty of deliberate brutality, but there is also the unintended barbarism of blind ignorance. It starts with cultural and religious slights: soldiers storming into a home without giving women a chance to cover their heads; army boots traipsing through mosques that have never been touched by the soles of shoes; a misunderstood hand signal at a checkpoint with deadly consequences.

And now Najaf. It's not just that sacred burial sites are being desecrated with fresh blood; it's that Americans appear unaware of the depths of this offense, and the repercussions it will have for decades to come. The Imam Ali Shrine is not a run-of-the-mill holy site; it's the Shiite equivalent of the Sistine Chapel. Najaf is not just another Iraqi city; it is the city of the dead, where the cemeteries go on forever, a place so sacred that every devout Shiite dreams of being buried there. And Muqtada al-Sadr and his followers are not just another group of generic terrorists out to kill Americans; their opposition to the occupation represents the overwhelmingly mainstream sentiment in Iraq. Yes, if elected Sadr would try to turn Iraq into a theocracy like Iran, but for now his demands are for direct elections and an end to foreign occupation.

Compare O'Brien's humility with the cockiness expressed by Glen Butler, a major in the Marines whose August 23 *New York Times* op-ed reads as if it were ghostwritten by Karl Rove. Butler brags that though he has been in Iraq for just over a month, he "know[s] a bit about the caliph, about the five pillars and about Allah." He goes on to explain that by swooping low over Najaf's cemeteries, he is not inflaming anti-American hatred in the Arab world but "attacking the source of the threat." The helicopter pilot blithely dismisses his enemies as foreign fighters and ex-Baathists and "a few frustrated Iraqis who worry about Wal-Mart culture infringing on their neighborhood."

It's hard to know where to begin. The Mahdi Army that Butler is attacking is made up of Iraqi citizens, not foreigners. They are not Baathists; they were the most oppressed under Saddam's regime and cheered his overthrow. And they aren't worried that Wal-Mart is taking over their neighborhood; they are enraged that they still lack electricity and sewage treatment despite the billions pledged for reconstruction.

Before Sadr's supporters began their uprising, they made their demands for elections and an end to occupation through sermons, peaceful protests and newspaper articles. US forces responded by shutting down their newspapers, firing on their demonstrations and bombing their neighborhoods. It was only then that Sadr went to war against the occupation. And every round fired out of Butler's helicopter doesn't make Des Moines and Santa Monica safer, as he claims. It makes the Mahdi Army stronger.

As I write this, days before the Republican convention, the plan for the demonstration seems to be to express general outrage about Iraq, to say "no to war" and "no to the Bush agenda." This is an important message, but it's not enough. We also need to hear specific demands to end the disastrous siege on Najaf, and unequivocal support for Iraqis who are desperate for democracy and an end to occupation.

United for Peace and Justice states that "there are two key moments this year when people throughout the United States will have the opportunity to send a resounding message of opposition to the Bush Agenda: November 2, election day, and August 29, in New York City." Sadly, this isn't the case: There is no chance for Bush's war agenda to be clearly rejected on Election Day, because John Kerry is promising to continue, and even strengthen, the military occupation of Iraq. That means there is only one chance for Americans to express their wholehearted rejection of the ongoing war on Iraq: in the streets outside the Republican National Convention. It's time to bring Najaf to New York. ■

★STATE★OF★THE UNION,2004★

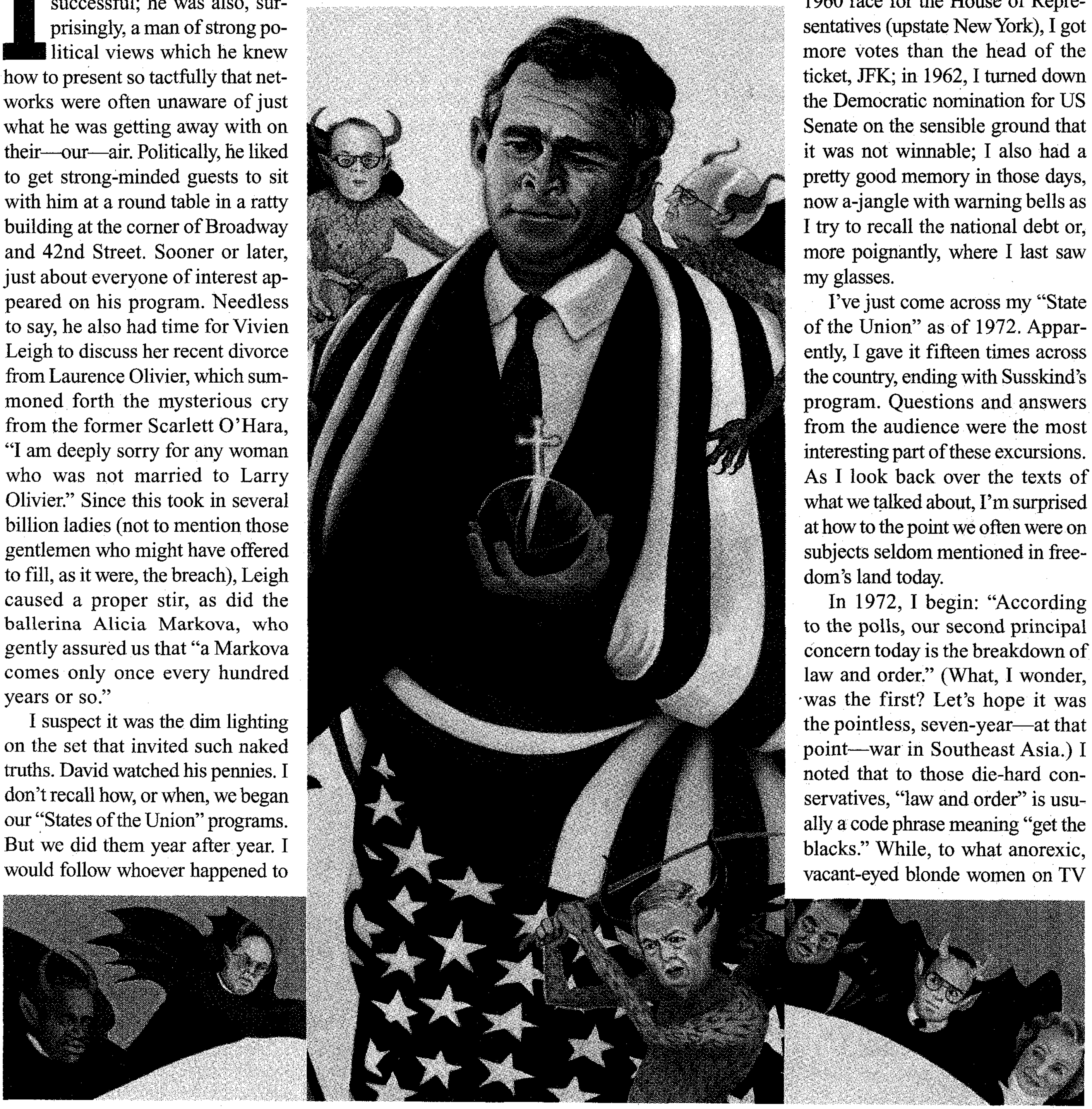
by GORE VIDAL

In the 1960s and '70s of the last unlamented century, there was a New York television producer named David Susskind. He was commercially successful; he was also, surprisingly, a man of strong political views which he knew how to present so tactfully that networks were often unaware of just what he was getting away with on their—our—air. Politically, he liked to get strong-minded guests to sit with him at a round table in a ratty building at the corner of Broadway and 42nd Street. Sooner or later, just about everyone of interest appeared on his program. Needless to say, he also had time for Vivien Leigh to discuss her recent divorce from Laurence Olivier, which summoned forth the mysterious cry from the former Scarlett O'Hara, "I am deeply sorry for any woman who was not married to Larry Olivier." Since this took in several billion ladies (not to mention those gentlemen who might have offered to fill, as it were, the breach), Leigh caused a proper stir, as did the ballerina Alicia Markova, who gently assured us that "a Markova comes only once every hundred years or so."

I suspect it was the dim lighting on the set that invited such naked truths. David watched his pennies. I don't recall how, or when, we began our "States of the Union" programs. But we did them year after year. I would follow whoever happened to be President, and I'd correct his "real" state of the union with one of my own, improvising from questions that David would prepare. I was a political pundit because in a 1960 race for the House of Representatives (upstate New York), I got more votes than the head of the ticket, JFK; in 1962, I turned down the Democratic nomination for US Senate on the sensible ground that it was not winnable; I also had a pretty good memory in those days, now a-jangle with warning bells as I try to recall the national debt or, more poignantly, where I last saw my glasses.

I've just come across my "State of the Union" as of 1972. Apparently, I gave it fifteen times across the country, ending with Susskind's program. Questions and answers from the audience were the most interesting part of these excursions. As I look back over the texts of what we talked about, I'm surprised at how to the point we often were on subjects seldom mentioned in freedom's land today.

In 1972, I begin: "According to the polls, our second principal concern today is the breakdown of law and order." (What, I wonder, was the first? Let's hope it was the pointless, seven-year—at that point—war in Southeast Asia.) I noted that to those die-hard conservatives, "law and order" is usually a code phrase meaning "get the blacks." While, to what anorexic, vacant-eyed blonde women on TV



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now describe as the "liberal elite," we were pushing the careful—that is, slow—elimination of poverty. Anything more substantive would have been regarded as communism, put forward by dupes. But then, I say very mildly, we have only one political party in the United States, the Property Party, with two right wings, Republican and Democrat. Since I tended to speak to conservative audiences in such civilized places as Medford, Oregon; Parkersburg, West Virginia; and Longview, Washington, there are, predictably, a few gasps at this rejection of so much received opinion. There are also quite a few nods from interested citizens who find it difficult at election time to tell the parties apart. Was it in pristine Medford that I actually saw the nodding Ralph Nader whom I was, to his horror, to run for President that year in *Esquire*? Inspired by the nods, I start to geld the lily, as the late Sam Goldwyn used to say. The Republicans are often more doctrinaire than the Democrats, who are willing to make small—very small—adjustments where the poor and black are concerned while giving aid and comfort to the anti-imperialists. Yes, I was already characterizing our crazed adventure in Vietnam as imperial, instead of yet another proof of our irrepressible, invincible altruism, ever eager to bring light to those who dwell in darkness.

I should note that in the thirty-two years since this particular state of the union, our political vocabulary has been turned upside down. Although the secret core to each presidential election is who can express his hatred of African-Americans most subtly (to which today can be added Latinos and "elite liberals," a fantasy category associated with working film actors who have won Academy Awards), and, of course, this season it's the marriage-minded so-called gays. So-called because there is no such human or mammal category (sex is a continuum) except in the great hollow pumpkin head of that gambling dude who has anointed himself the nation's moralist-in-chief, William "Bell Fruit" Bennett.

Back to the time machine. In some ways, looking at past states of the union, it is remarkable how things tend to stay the same. Race-gender wars are always on our overcrowded back burners. There is also—always—a horrendous foreign enemy at hand ready to blow us up in the night out of hatred for our Goodness and rosy plumpness. In 1972, when I started my tour at the Yale Political Union, the audience was packed with hot-eyed neocons-to-be, though the phrase was not yet in use, as the inventors of neoconnery were still Trotskyists to a man or woman or even "Bell Fruit," trying to make it in New York publishing.

I also stay away from the failing economy. "I leave to my friend Ken Galbraith the solving of the current depression." If they appear to know who Galbraith is, I remark how curious that his fame should be based on two books, *The Liberal Hour*, published a few years before the right-wing Nixon criminals tried to hijack the election of 1972 (Watergate was bursting open when I began my tour), and *The Affluent Society*, published shortly before we had a cash-flow problem.

In the decades since this state of the union, the United States has had more people, per capita, locked away in prisons than any other country, while the sick economy of '72 is long forgotten as worse problems—and deficits—beset us. For one thing, we no

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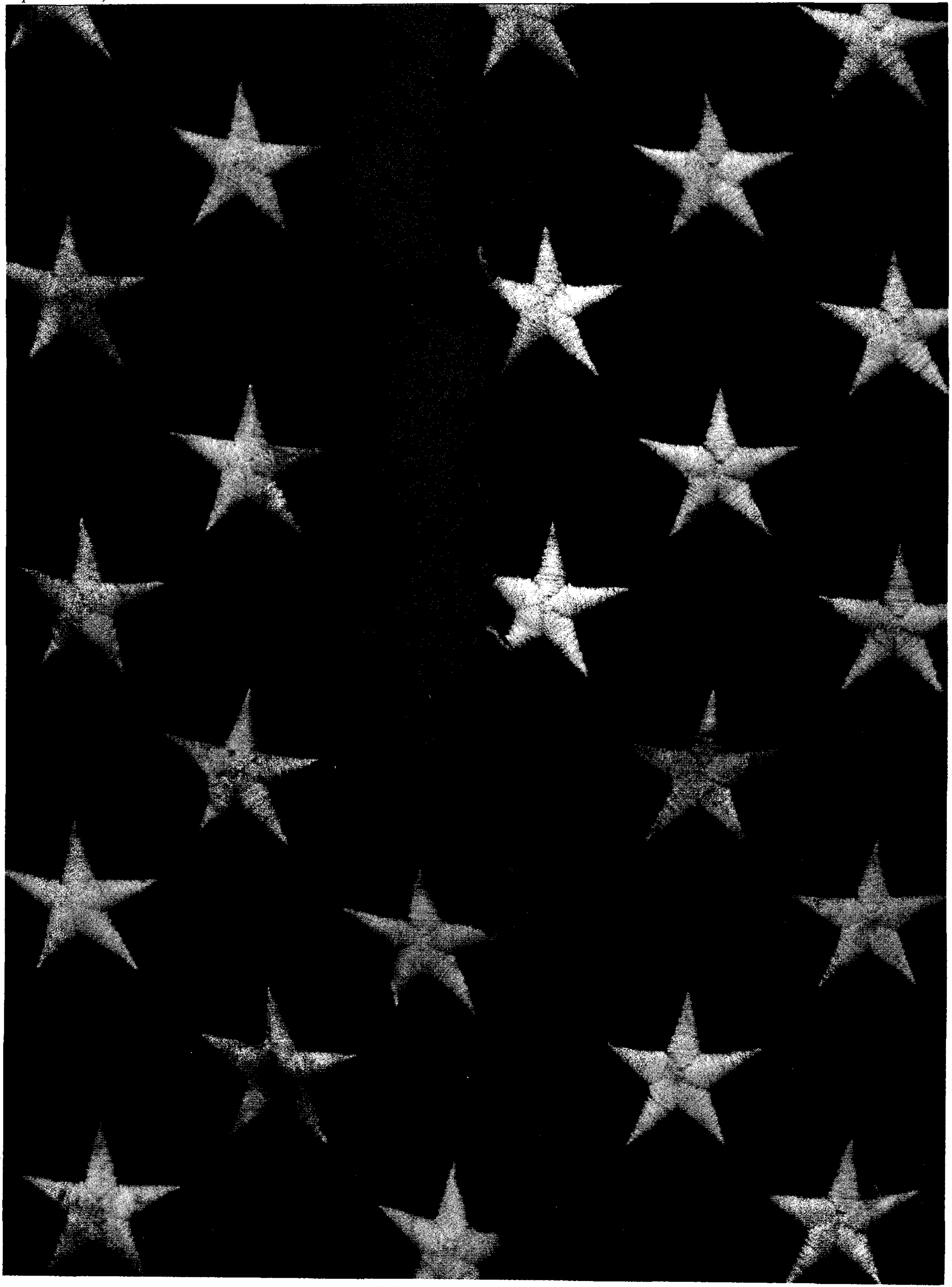
This article is excerpted from Gore Vidal's latest book, Imperial America, *just published by Nation Books.*



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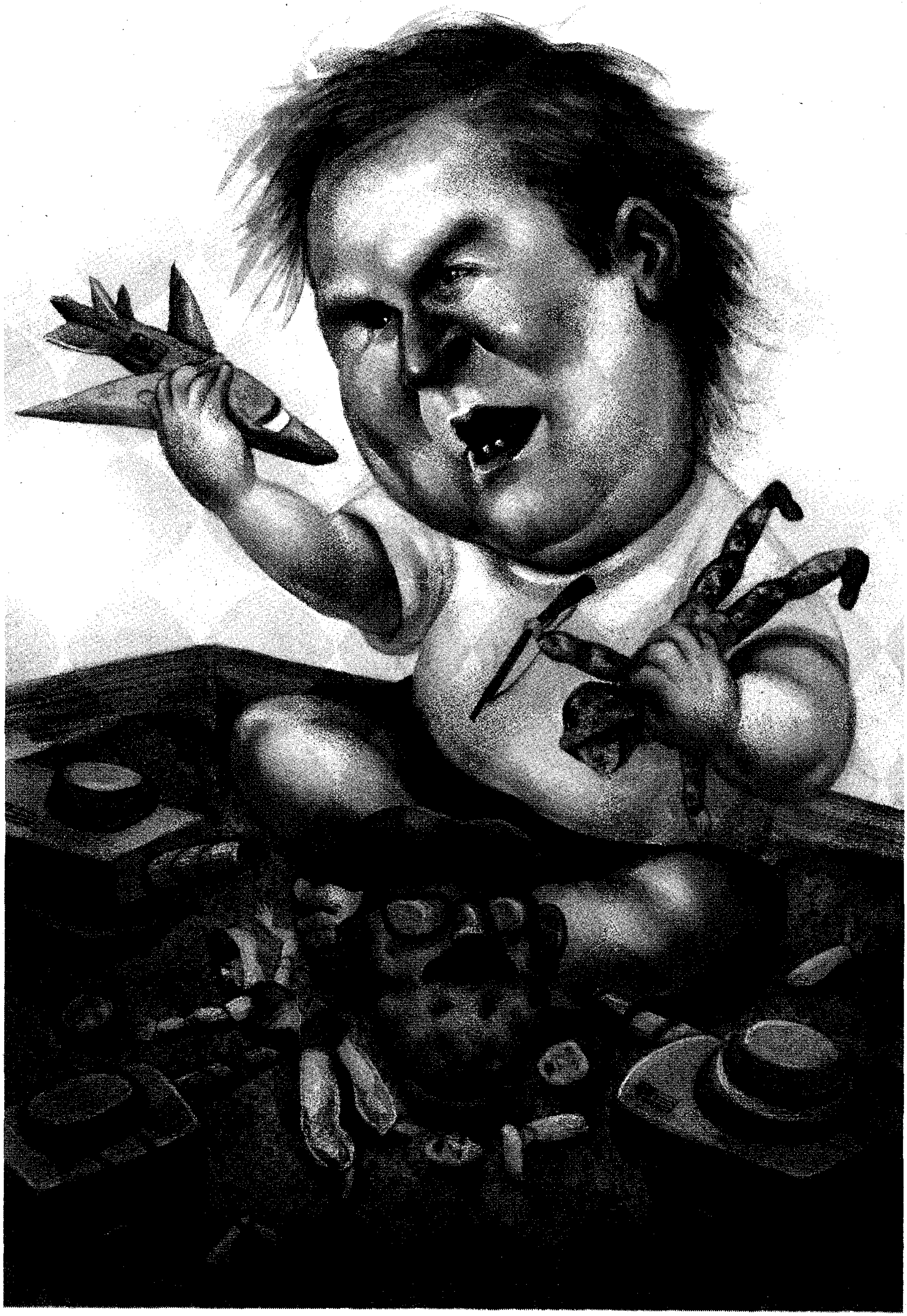
longer live in a nation, but in a Homeland. In 1972, "roughly 80 percent of police work in the United States has to do with the regulation of our private morals. By that I mean controlling what we smoke, eat, put in our veins—not to mention trying to regulate with whom and how we have sex, with whom and how we gamble. As a result our police are among the most corrupt in the Western world."

I don't think this would get the same gasp today that it did back then. I point out police collusion with gamblers, drug dealers, prostitutes and, indeed, anyone whose sexual activities have been proscribed by a series of state legal codes that were—are—the scandal of what we like to call a free society. These codes are often defended because they are very old. For instance, the laws against sodomy go back 1,400 years to the Emperor Justinian, who felt that there should be such laws because, "as everyone knows," he declared, "sodomy is a principal cause of earthquake."

Sodomy gets the audience's attention. "Cynically, one might allow the police their kinky pleasures in busting boys and girls who attract them if they showed the slightest interest in the protection of persons and property, which is what we pay them to do." I then suggested that "we remove from the statute books all penalties that have to do with private morals—what are called 'victimless crimes.' If a man or a woman wants to be a prostitute, that is his or her affair. Certainly, it is no business of the state what we do with our bodies sexually. Obviously, laws will remain on the books for the prevention of rape and the abuse of children, while the virtue of our animal friends will continue to be protected by the SPCA." Relieved laughter at this point. He can't be serious—or is he?

I speak of legalizing gambling. Bingo players nod. Then: "All drugs should be legalized and sold at cost to anyone with a doctor's prescription." Most questions, later, are about this horrific proposal. Brainwashing on the subject begins early, insuring that a large crop of the coming generation will become drug addicts. Prohibition always has that effect, as we should have learned when we prohibited alcohol from 1919 to 1933; but, happily for the busy lunatics who rule over us, we are permanently the United States of Amnesia. We learn nothing because we remember nothing. The period of Prohibition called the "Noble Experiment" brought on the greatest breakdown of law and order that we have ever endured—until today, of course. Lesson? Do not regulate the private lives of people, because if you do they will become angry and antisocial, and they will get what they want from criminals, who work in perfect freedom because they know how to pay off the police.

What should be done about drug addiction? As of 1970, England was the model for us to emulate. With a population of 55 million people, they had only 1,800 heroin addicts. With our 200 million people we had nearly a half-million addicts. What were they doing right? For one thing, they turned the problem over to the doctors. Instead of treating the addict as a criminal, they required him to register with a physician, who then gives him, at controlled intervals, a prescription so that he can obtain his drug. Needless to say, our society, based as it is on a passion to punish others, could not bear so sensible a solution. We promptly leaned, as they say, on the British to criminalize the sale and consumption of drugs, and now the beautiful city of



BAD BOY: Anita Kunz

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Edinburgh is one of the most drug-infested places in Europe. Another triumph for the American way.

I start to expand. "From the Drug Enforcement Administration to the FBI, we are afflicted with all sorts of secret police, busily spying on us. The FBI, since its founding, has generally steered clear of major crime like the Mafia. In fact, much of its time and energies have been devoted to spying on those Americans whose political beliefs did not please the late J. Edgar Hoover, a man who hated commies, blacks and women in, more or less, that order. But then the FBI has always been a collaborating tool of reactionary politicians. The bureau also has had a nasty talent for amusing Presidents with lurid dossiers on their political enemies." Now in the year 2004, when we have ceased to be a nation under law but instead a homeland where the withered Bill of Rights, like a dead trumpet vine, clings to our pseudo-Roman columns, Homeland Security appears to be uniting our secret police into a single sort of Gestapo with dossiers on everyone to prevent us, somehow or other, from being terrorized by various implacable Second and Third World enemies. Where there is no known Al Qaeda sort of threat, we create one, as in Iraq, whose leader, Saddam Hussein, had no connection with 9/11 or any other proven terrorism against the United States, making it necessary for a President to invent the lawless as well as evil (to use his Bible-based language) doctrine of pre-emptive war based on a sort of hunch that maybe one day some country might attack us, so, meanwhile, as he and his business associates covet their oil, we go to war, leveling their cities to be rebuilt by other business associates. Thus was our perpetual cold war turned hot.

My father, uncle and two stepbrothers graduated from the US Military Academy at West Point, where I was born in the cadet hospital. Although I was brought up by a political grandfather in Washington, DC, I was well immersed in the West Point ethos—Duty, Honor, Country—as was David Eisenhower, the President's grandson, whom I met years later. We exchanged notes on how difficult it was to free oneself from that world. "They never let go," I said. "It's like a family."

"No," he said, "it's a religion." Although neither of us attended the Point, each was born in the cadet hospital; each went to Exeter; each grew up listening to West Pointers gossip about one another as well as vent their political views, usually to the far right. At the time of the Second World War, many of them thought we were fighting the wrong side. We should be helping Hitler destroy Communism. Later, we could take care of him.

In general, they disliked politicians, Franklin Roosevelt most of all. There was also a degree of low-key anti-Semitism, while pre–World War II blacks were Ellisonian invisibles. Even so, in that great war, Duty and Honor served the country surprisingly well. Unfortunately, some served themselves well when Truman militarized the economy, providing all sorts of lucrative civilian employment for high-ranking officers. Yet it was Eisenhower himself who warned us in 1961 of the dangers of the "military-industrial complex." Unfortunately, no one seemed eager to control military spending, particularly after the Korean War, which we notoriously failed to win even though the cry "The Russians are coming!" was heard daily throughout the land. Propaganda necessary for Truman's military buildup was never questioned...particularly when demagogues like Senator McCarthy were destroying careers with reckless accusations that anyone able to read the *New York Times* without moving his lips was a Communist. I touched, glancingly, on all this in Nixonian 1972, when the media, Corporate America and the highly peculiar President were creating as much terror in the populace as they could in order to build up a war machine that they thought would prevent a recurrence of the Great Depression, which had only ended in 1940 when FDR put billions into rearmament and we had full employment and prosperity for the first time in that generation.

I strike a few mildly optimistic notes. "We should have a national health service, something every civilized country in the world has. Also, improved public transport (trains!). Also, schools which do more than teach conformity. Also, a cleaning of the air, of the water, of the earth before we all die of the poisons set loose by a society based on greed." Enron, of course, is decades in the future, as are the American wars of aggression against Afghanistan and Iraq.

In the end, we may offer Richard Nixon a debt of gratitude. I'm in a generous mood. "Through Nixon's awesome ineptitude we have seen revealed the political corruption of our society." (We had, of course, seen nothing yet!) What to do? I proposed that no candidate for any office be allowed to buy space on television or in any newspaper or other medium: "This will stop cold the present system, where Presidents and Congressmen are bought by corporations and even by foreign countries. To become President, you will not need thirty, forty, fifty million dollars to smear your opponents and present yourself falsely on TV commercials." Were the sums ever so tiny?

Instead, television (and the rest of the media) would be required by law to provide prime time (and space) for the various candidates.

"I would also propose a four-week election period as opposed to the current four-year marathon. Four weeks is more than enough time to present the issues. To show us the candidates in interviews, debates, uncontrolled encounters, in which we can see who the candidate really is, answering tough questions, his record up there for all to examine. This ought to get a better class into politics." As I reread this, I think of Arnold Schwarzenegger. I now add: Should the candidate happen to be a professional actor, a scene or two from Shakespeare might be required during the audition...I mean, the primary. Also, as a tribute to Ole Bell Fruit, who favors public executions of drug dealers, these should take place during prime time as the empire gallops into its Ben-Hur phase.

I must say, I am troubled by the way I responded to the audience's general hatred of government. I say we are the government. But I was being sophistical when I responded to their claims that our government is our enemy with that other cliché, *you* are the government. Unconsciously, I seem to have been avoiding the message that I got from one end of the country to the other: We hate this system that we are trapped in, but we don't know who has trapped us or how. We don't even know what our cage looks like because we have never seen it from the outside. Now, thirty-two years later, audiences still want to know who will let them out of the Enron-Pentagon prison with its socialism for the rich and free enterprise for the poor. So...welcome to Imperial America. ■

Comune di Castelnuovo Berardenga

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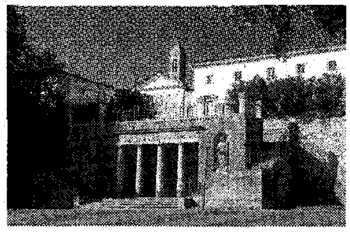

Castelnuovo Berardenga is a Tuscan medieval village, 1 hour from Florence and 10 minutes from Siena, located in Chianti. For 3000 years, this amazing territory, made of villages, farmhouses and castles, has harmoniously combined environment, history and culture. Wine and olive oil of this land are world-famous. **In 1999 Castelnuovo joined Agenda 21, the UN Action Plan for citizens participation and sustainable development.** Here are the highlights:

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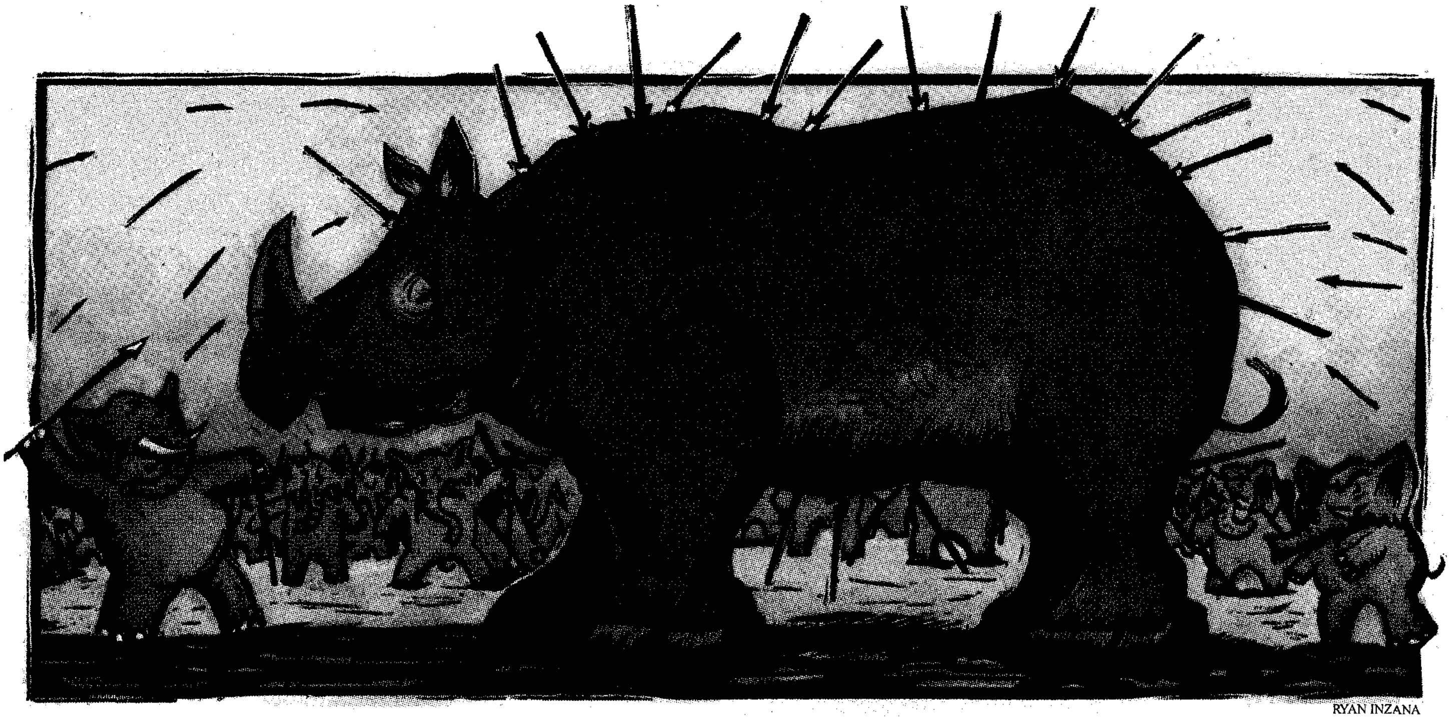

RYAN INZANA

Hunting for RINOs

JOHN NICHOLS

He criticizes conservatives who campaign on a hot-button agenda of "God, guns and gays" in order to divert the attention of voters from fundamental economic and foreign policy issues. He says "government is good and government is necessary" and condemns those who would dramatically downsize federal and state programs as "nihilists." He asks thoughtful questions about the Bush Administration's approach to the war in Iraq. He opposes the Bush Administration's push for a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. And he proudly touts the backing he has received from the League of Conservation Voters and the United Auto Workers union.

Who is this guy, John Kerry? No, he's Joe Schwarz, the newly minted Republican nominee for an open House seat in a Michigan district that leans strongly enough in the party's favor to pretty much assure that he will win a ticket to Washington in November.

Schwarz calls himself a "mainstream Republican" or, when the 66-year-old physician is waxing ideological, a "traditional conservative" who respects both individual liberty and civic responsibility—as opposed to the current batch of neoconservatives and "extremists" who, he suggests, have warped the moniker beyond anything Barry Goldwater or even Ronald Reagan would have recognized. But in the shorthand parlance of the current political debate, Schwarz is best described as a moderate—some would even say liberal—Republican. In a party that has swung hard to the right in the past decade, that makes him a rarity. And winning a contested primary over several more-conservative candidates, as Schwarz did in early August, makes him downright remarkable—so much so that the beleaguered band of Republican moderates and mavericks in Congress is hailing his nomination as a sign that their fortunes have finally turned. Arizona Senator John McCain, who campaigned for Schwarz, went so far as to suggest that the Michigan Republican's election could ease the overall pattern of ideological polarization in Congress.

McCain is being overly optimistic. Moderate Republicans can point to a few victories this year—including Schwarz's nomination and Senator Arlen Specter's narrow win over a conservative challenger in a Pennsylvania primary—but the trends do not seem to be running in favor of those whom right-wing strategists dismiss as RINOs: "Republicans In Name Only." The conservative jihadists, who seek to cleanse the party of all but true believers, are quick to dismiss Schwarz's victory over a fractured conservative opposition as an accident of political nature. Far from being the harbinger of a new era of political cooperation, they argue, Schwarz is simply the last egg to hatch from an ideological breed that will soon be every bit as extinct as the dinosaurs. To hasten the process, right-wing operatives have formed "RINO Hunters Clubs," and they are pouring time, energy and their considerable resources into hunting down the last of the moderates. In a party where crude conservatives like Senate majority whip Mitch McConnell of Kentucky and House majority leader Tom DeLay of Texas call a lot more of the shots than John McCain and Joe Schwarz, don't bet on the moderates to prevail.

To be sure, the RINOs will have their moment in the spotlight when Republicans meet in New York. Despite the fact that President Bush and Vice President Cheney have shaped what is arguably the most radically right-wing administration in the nation's history, the GOP national convention that will renominate them will shine its spotlight on many of the party's most moderate members. California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, former New York Mayor Rudy Giuliani and current New York Mayor

Mike Bloomberg, all supporters of abortion rights and gay rights, will have prime speaking slots, as will McCain, the maverick senator who has broken with the Bush Administration on everything from environmental protection to budget policy. The moderate-and-maverick-heavy schedule has caused a lot of grumbling among conservative purists, who complain that—aside from the President and Vice President—the most sincere right-winger on the podium during prime time may turn out to be Georgia Senator Zell Miller, who still claims to be a Democrat. They argue that the roster of speakers is unrepresentative, and of course they are right: The cavalcade of moderates is nothing more than cover for a right-wing party that is trying to cling to power by showing its most mainstream and appealing face—much as Bush did in 2000 with his talk of "compassionate conservatism."

By every measure, the Grand Old Party—which was founded by radical foes of slavery, spawned the Progressive movement and served as the political home for twentieth-century liberals such as Senators Robert La Follette of Wisconsin, George Norris of Nebraska, John Sherman Cooper of Kentucky, Jacob Javits of New York and Mark Hatfield of Oregon, as well as former New York Mayor John Lindsay and former New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller—is now more conservative in its makeup than at any time in its 150-year history. While a number of Republican governors, such as Ohio's Bob Taft and New York's George Pataki, are still classified as relative moderates—either because of their refusal to demagogue on social issues or because they are not prepared to embrace tax and spending cuts that would render government completely dysfunctional—the situation has gotten so dire that former Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Christine Todd Whitman, President Bush's most moderate appointee, felt compelled to write a *New York Times* opinion piece earlier this year in which she argued on behalf of the GOP's moderate wing "that there was still room for us in the party of Lincoln."

Whitman's complaint that "many conservatives act as if they wish we moderates would just disappear" is well founded. Even the slightest deviation from the conservative playbook brings an accusatory cry of "liberal!"—which is absurd, considering the fact that old-school Republican liberalism has all but disappeared. Using the measures that progressives might reasonably apply to define a liberal—support for abortion rights and gay rights, enthusiasm for public education and protection of the environment, sympathy with tax policies that make it possible to maintain a functional federal government, respect for international law and concern about military adventurism as evidenced by opposition to the authorization for President Bush to use force against Iraq—it is possible to point to just one senator, Rhode Island's Lincoln Chafee, and two members of the House, New York's Amo Houghton and Iowa's Jim Leach. Those three Republicans have regularly been rated as more liberal in *National Journal* measures of Congressional voting patterns than many prominent Democrats with whom they serve. A somewhat larger circle clings to the moderate GOP mantras of a Gerald Ford or a Richard Lugar, chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. But they are fading fast as a force in Congress. Mike Castle, the Delaware representative who was one of ten House Republicans to support the Clinton Administration's positions on most issues and who has

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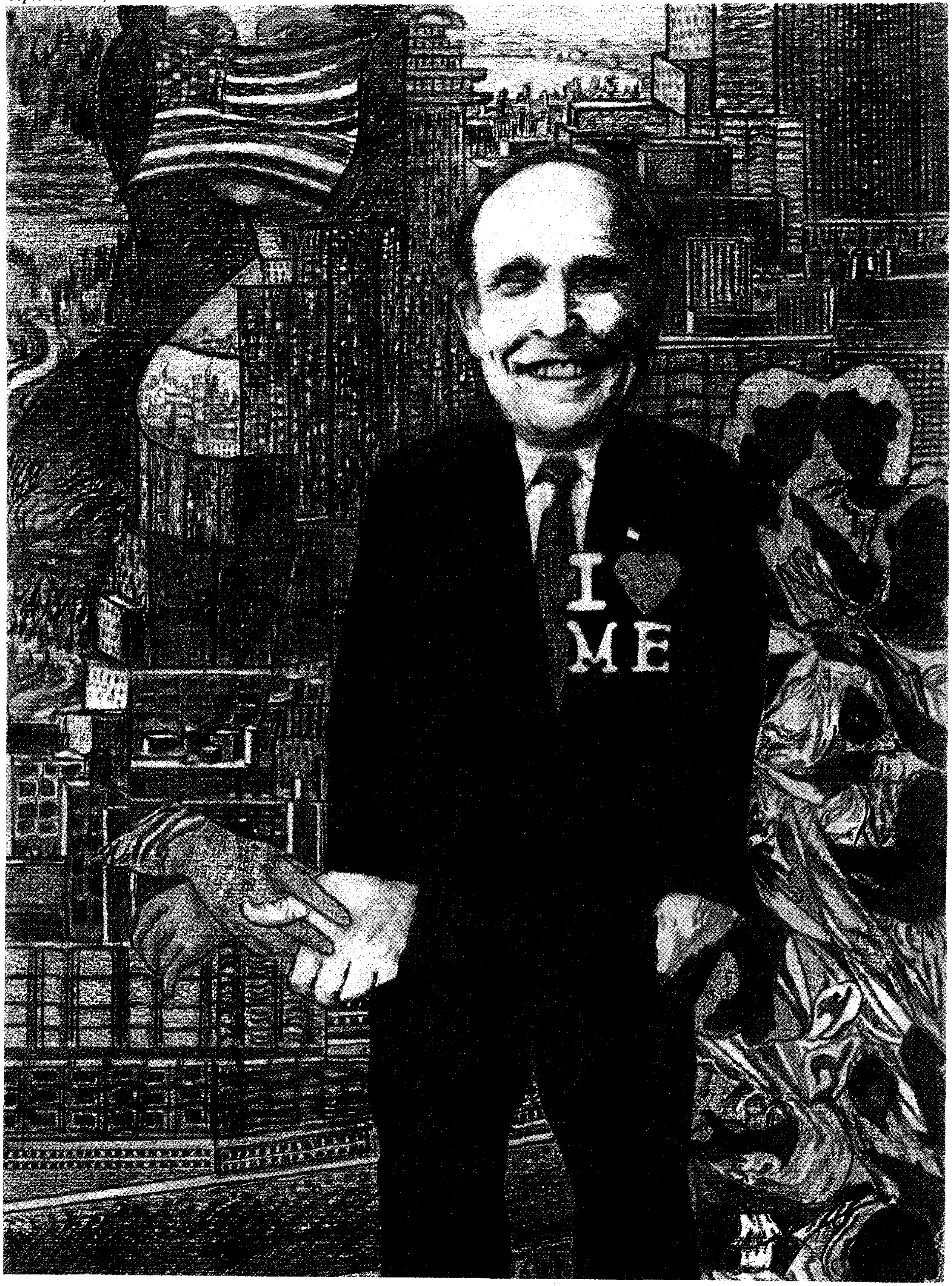
clashed with the Bush Administration on issues like support for stem-cell research, presides over the Republican Main Street Coalition, which has emerged in the past six years as the primary grouping of party moderates. "There are not that many of us," Castle has said, claiming that forty to forty-five GOP House members, out of 229, still identify themselves as moderates.

That's actually a bit of a stretch—either of the numbers or of the definition of "moderate." On most issues that might define a Republican as a moderate, the circle is far smaller. Only thirty-four Republican House members voted to protect the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge (ANWR) from oil and gas development. Only seventeen opposed the "Marriage Protection Act," which would prevent federal courts from ruling on the constitutionality of state same-sex marriage laws. Only nine opposed the ban on late-term abortions. Only eight supported cooperation with the International Criminal Court. In the Senate, where there are fifty-one Republican members, only eight members of the GOP caucus cast a key vote to protect ANWR, while six voted to block the same-sex marriage amendment and roughly that many can be counted on to consistently support abortion rights. Just two Republican senators backed cooperation with the ICC.

To be sure, though their numbers are small, moderate Republicans can still have a big impact. For instance, the same-sex marriage amendment was doomed in the Senate when McCain, Chafee, Colorado's Ben Nighthorse Campbell, New Hampshire's John Sununu and Mainers Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins joined the majority of Democrats in opposing it. If Bush loses in November, moderate Republicans will be quick to argue that it was because party leaders veered too far to the right. McCain will make the talk-show rounds, and either he or Nebraska Senator Chuck Hagel will ramp up a "mainstream Republican" campaign for the party's 2008 presidential nomination. But they will be countered by conservatives who will claim, as some already do, that Bush went soft on the fundamentals—slashing government spending, eliminating programs, erasing the line of separation between church and state, reversing protections for the environment that are portrayed as threats to business and chipping away at the right to choose—and that Congressional moderates prevented hard-liners from holding the White House accountable. "Yes, we do have Republican majorities in both houses, but we don't have conservative majorities," grumbles former US Representative James Rogan, a California conservative. "On any given day, just a handful of moderate or liberal Republicans can band together with the Democrats and reshape policies that aren't conservative policies. That forces the White House, and the House and Senate leadership, to compromise with the moderate and liberal members."

Thus, the argument goes, the moderate wing of the party must be eliminated. Right-wing strategists such as Grover Norquist and Stephen Moore, leader of the Club for Growth, say that by making the Republican Party more conservative they can achieve the sort of sweeping policy shifts that they feel were denied them during the presidencies of Ronald Reagan and George H.W. Bush. They note that, after the 1994 "Republican revolution" election put the GOP in charge of the House and Senate, President Clinton moved quickly to outconservative the conservatives on issues such as welfare reform and support for the federal Defense of Marriage Act. In their view, the RINOs simply slow the inevitable march to



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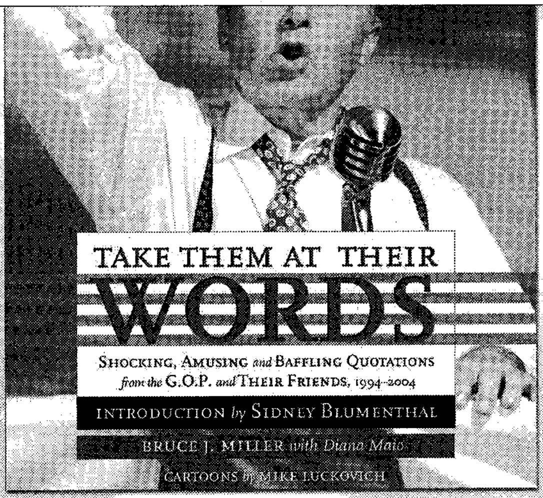
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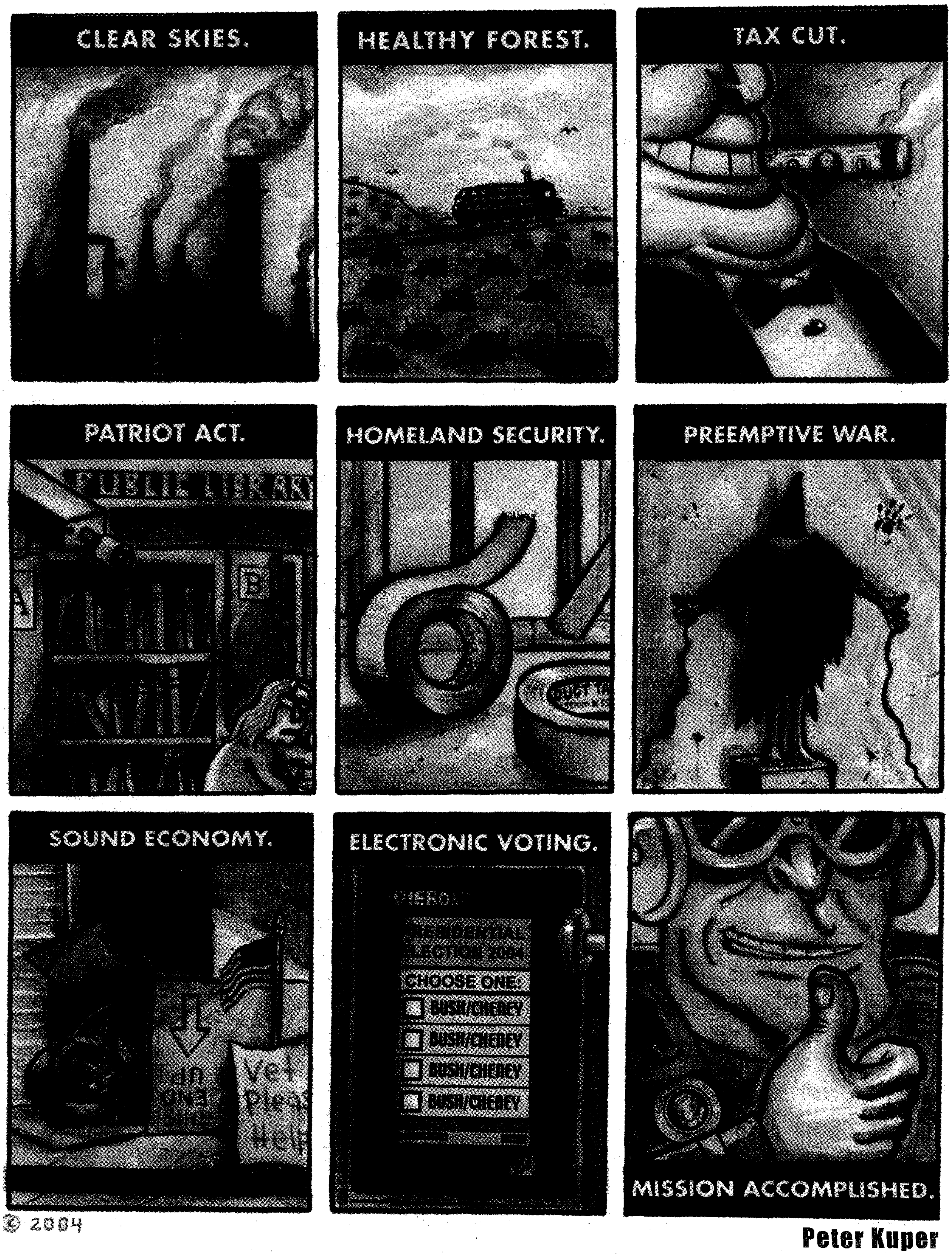
the right. Moore says that a Republican primary between a conservative and a moderate such as Michigan's Schwarz must be seen as a "good versus evil showdown" over the future not merely of the party but of the country.

For his part, Schwarz, a lifelong Republican who proudly notes that Jackson, a town in his district, claims to be the party's birthplace, hates the term RINO. "That little sobriquet is so baseless and so outrageous," he says. "[The RINO attack] was ginned up by people who don't believe you can be a Republican unless you're hard right on social issues."

Nonetheless, the Taliban wing of the GOP gleefully sells memberships in what the National Federation of Republican Assemblies, a coalition of state-based right-wing groups, refers to as the "RINO Hunters Club," whose stated goal is to "root out and hunt down RINOs" in order to "prevent liberal Republicans from receiving the GOP nomination to offices throughout the nation." With big-money support from the Club for Growth, as well as floating alliances with anti-abortion and pro-gun groups, RINO hunters have scored a number of recent victories. In 2002, for instance, they upset the best-laid plans of White House political czar Karl Rove when former Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan, a moderate who was potentially electable, was beaten in a GOP primary for governor of California by Bill Simon, a conservative who was unelectable but politically "pure" in the eyes of the RINO hunters. This year, the RINO hunters probably would have taken down Pennsylvania's Specter, a pro-choice and reasonably labor-friendly senator, if it had not been for the timely intervention of Bush and Cheney. The White House, which feared that knocking the Senator off the ticket would undermine Bush's re-election prospects this fall, saved Specter's RINO hide. Still, the result was so close that the right claimed a moral victory.

In the House, the RINO hunters have made it increasingly difficult for moderate Republicans to win nominations for open seats; on the day Schwarz won his Michigan primary, Kansas Republican primary voters rejected a relatively moderate candidate backed by former Senator Dole in favor of a former aide to Attorney General John Ashcroft who attacked his opponent for failing to endorse the constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage. At the same time that they bar the door to new moderates, the RINO hunters hound senior House members who deviate from religious-right stances on abortion and gay rights or who display a willingness to work with Democrats. In just the past two election cycles, a parade of veteran Republicans with centrist sentiments have opted to retire; this year alone, five of the House's most moderate Republican members—New Yorkers Houghton and Jack Quinn, Pennsylvania's Jim Greenwood, Nebraska's Doug Bereuter and California's Doug Ose—are leaving. Another, New York's Sherwood Boehlert, one of the most respected environmentalists in Congress, faces a fierce September primary challenge from a right-winger who, campaigning in 2002 as a "real Republican," came within 2,700 votes of ousting him.

Increasingly, progressives are coming to recognize that the ideological cleansing of the GOP caucus is not just an internal party matter. With Republicans in charge of both houses of Congress, the exodus of moderates means that the boundaries of federal policy-making are defined by what Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee chair Robert Matsui accurately describes as "a House dominated by the extreme agenda of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A Little Education Can Be a Dangerous Thing

RYAN INZANA

Most teachers delight at being remembered by their former students. But when the student is Dick Cheney, it can be embarrassing.

Consider the case of Dr. H. Bradford Westerfield.

Westerfield started hearing in the 1980s that a very right-wing Republican member of Congress was dropping his name at gatherings of Yale Clubs in the Western United States. "Yale graduates join these clubs and get together in places like Wyoming and Colorado and Montana. They like to invite speakers who have ties to Yale, and apparently Dick Cheney was one of them," recalled Westerfield, the Damon Wells Professor Emeritus of International Studies and Political Science at Yale, where he taught more than 10,000 students between 1957 and 2000. "The reason people contacted me was because he was apparently mentioning my name as someone who had an influence on his thinking."

It is usually an honor for an academic to be cited as an influence upon the thinking of a powerful player on the national scene. But for Westerfield, the Cheney connection seemed a stretch. He could barely recall Cheney as a student, and they had not been in contact since the Republican representative was asked to withdraw from Yale in the early 1960s. Besides, Cheney was a hawkish proponent of American military adventurism abroad, while Westerfield had a more nuanced view of the role the United States ought to play in international affairs. But the reports from Cheney's appearances at those Yale Clubs persisted. As Cheney became ever more prominent, in Congress, then as Defense Secretary, and finally as the most powerful Vice President in the history of the United States, Westerfield kept hearing that Cheney was telling people about how he had been inspired by the one class he took from the professor. In a profile of Cheney published by *Time* in 2002, in which the writer described the Vice President's penchant for unilateral warmaking, one of the explanations proffered by analysts was, "During a stint at Yale, Cheney was moved by a course he took from H. Bradford Westerfield, then a self-described ardent hawk who believed the U.S. should use its role as the leader of the free world to fight communism wherever it took hold."

That sounded like a plausible explanation for Cheney's worldview, which was obviously not grounded in contemporary experience or knowledge of realities on the ground in countries such as Iraq. But it was discomforting to Westerfield.

The crowded introduction to the "US International Relations" course Cheney took with Westerfield was, according to the professor, "effectively a course about the United States in the cold war. I was at the peak of my hawkishness about the cold war, and that was the perspective from which I was teaching. Whatever he picked up from me had that flavor, which is unfortunate."

Unfortunate? How so?

"I came to understand that the hawkish view was unrealistic," says Westerfield, who, like so many Americans, was jarred into a new way of thinking by watching the country's presence in Vietnam degenerate into disaster. "I remained hawkish until late 1967, early 1968, when I began to feel the war really was unwinnable. Until then, I think I was the last hawk on campus that anyone would listen to.

"I've remained dovish ever since," says the professor, a well-regarded author of numerous books on US foreign policy, including *Inside CIA's Private World.*

Westerfield's dovishness puts him in a very different camp from that of his former student. "I do not agree with his worldview today," says the professor. "I'm not even sure I understand it. He is so at odds with what we know about the world today. Unfortunately, I think it is clear that Bush is quite dependent on him. He prefers a backroom role, but he is obviously very influential. Even Rumsfeld and Wolfowitz I do not think have the influence that Cheney does."

Westerfield last spoke with Cheney in the mid-1990s, at a memorial service for Les Aspin, Cheney's successor as Defense Secretary. Cheney greeted the professor warmly but showed no interest in serious discussion with the internationally respected academic. Does Westerfield wish that he could sit Cheney down and set his former student straight? Westerfield does not think more course work would do much good. "He's obviously incorrigible. He seems to be determined to go his own way, no matter what facts he is confronted with. It's disturbing."

What to do? As the 2004 campaign heated up, Westerfield said that he had settled "very comfortably" into the camp of those who seek to bring an end to his former student's tenure in the White House. "Yes, I really want to beat Bush and Cheney. I feel that this Administration doesn't want to work in coalition with the rest of the world; they really do not want to cooperate with the world. And that is precisely the wrong approach for the United States at this point."

As an expert in such matters, Westerfield says, "There is a great deal of work that needs to be done to re-establish American credibility in the world. And the first step, I think, is to elect an administration that takes our relationships with other countries more seriously."

And just for the record, what about Dick Cheney's grades in the course that so influenced him? "His grades were not particularly good," the professor says sheepishly. Pressed, Westerfield explains, "Allowing for grade inflation, his final grade would probably be a low B." Translation: Dick Cheney passed the course that sent him on the way to guiding the affairs of state with a gentleman's C.

JOHN NICHOLS

John Nichols is The Nation*'s Washington correspondent. His biography of Dick Cheney,* Dick: The Man Who Is President, *from which this is excerpted, will be published this month by the New Press.*

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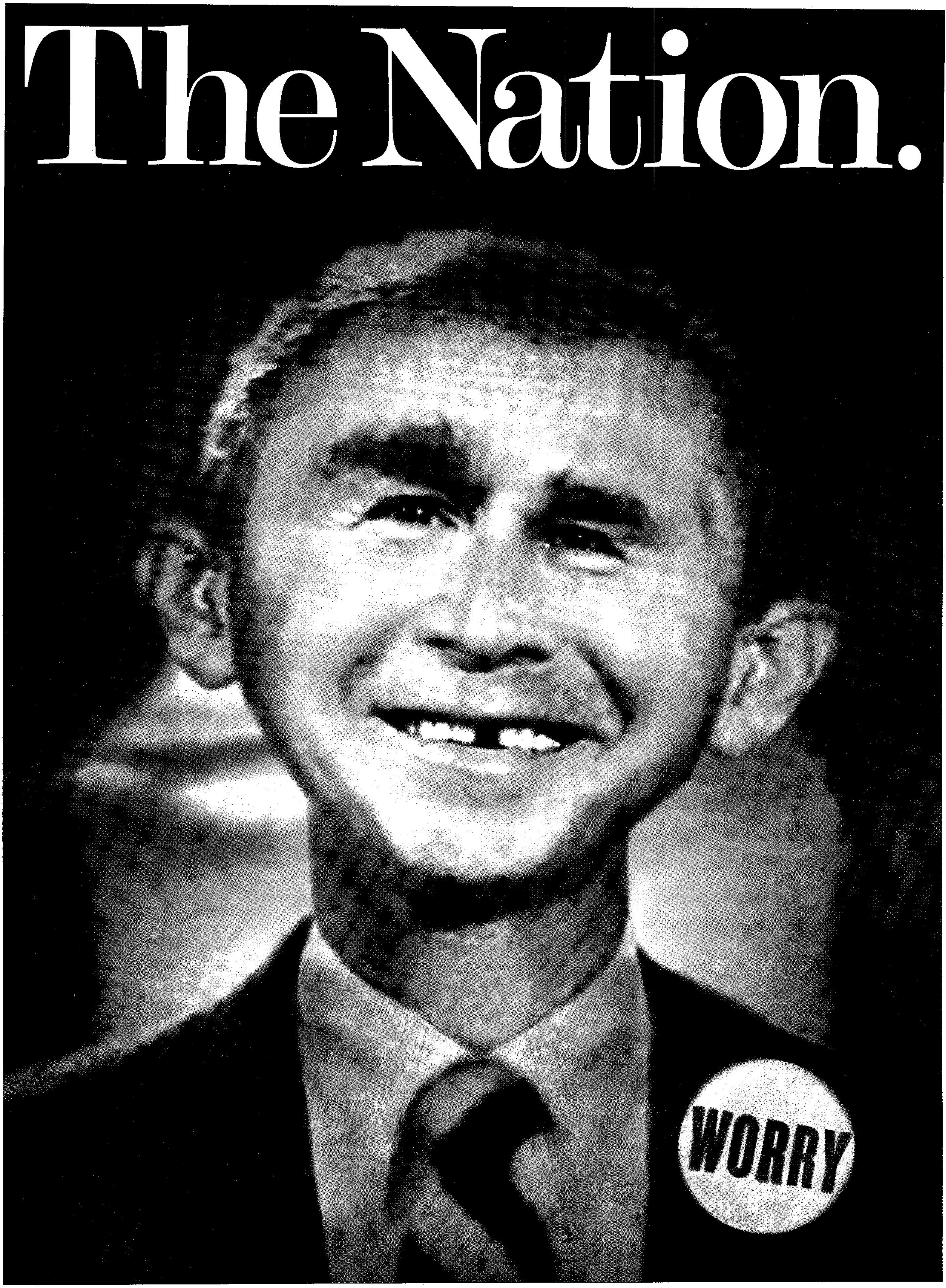
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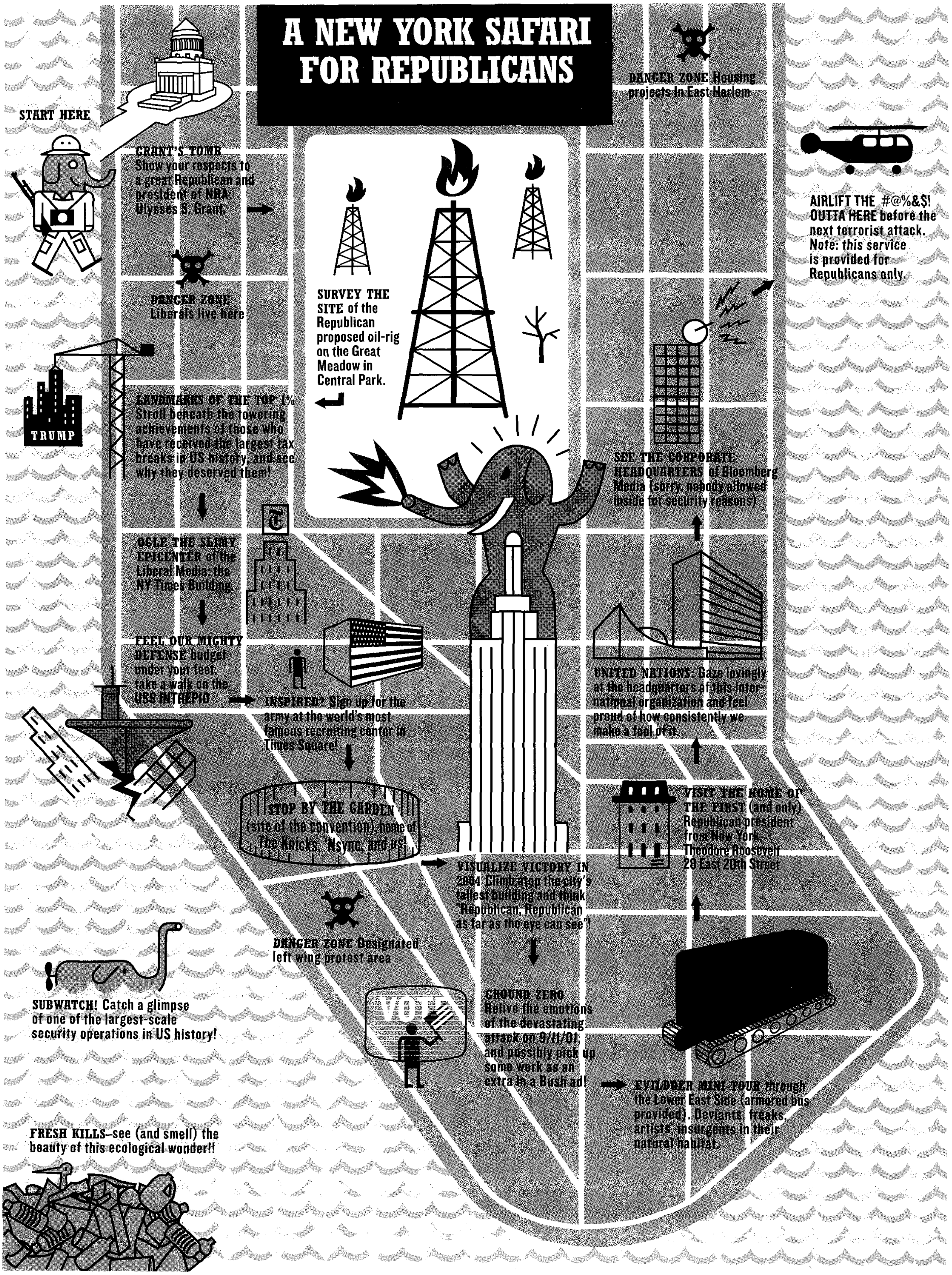

START HERE

GRANT'S TOMB Show your respects to a great Republican and president of NRA: Ulysses S. Grant.

DANGER ZONE Liberals live here

SURVEY THE SITE of the Republican proposed oil-rig on the Great Meadow in Central Park.

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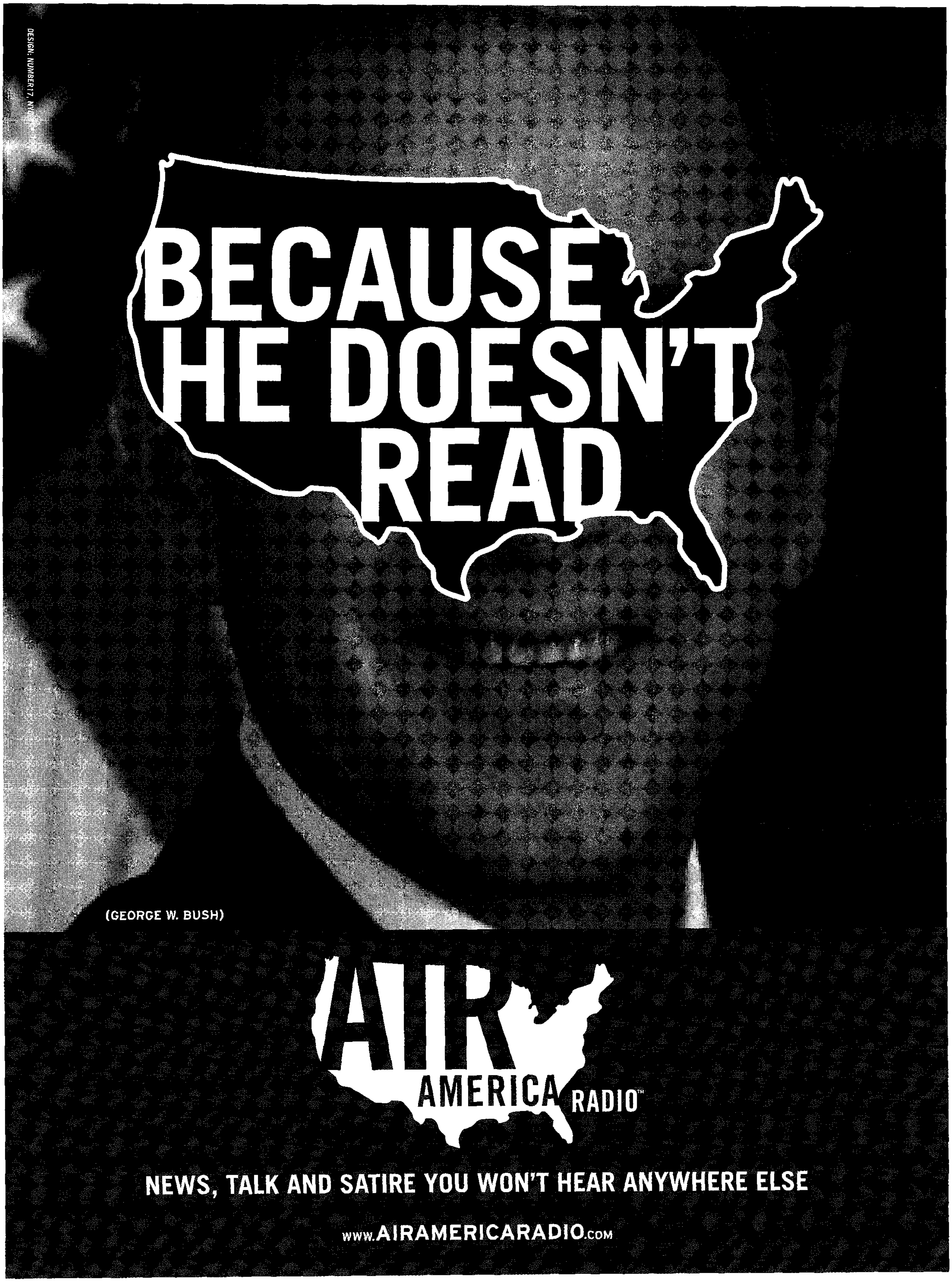
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GOP leader DeLay." Matsui would, of course, prefer that progressives simply back Democrats. But groups such as the League of Conservation Voters and a number of major unions, including the UAW, the Teamsters and the National Education Association, have begun to recognize that in districts such as Michigan's Seventh, where Schwarz is running, the choice that matters is not likely to be between Democrats and Republicans but rather between moderate Republicans whom they can work with on at least some issues and conservative Republicans who will never cooperate with them—and who will move the party even further to the right. The LCV spent some $400,000 on an independent campaign backing Schwarz in this year's GOP primary, while the UAW, a political powerhouse in Michigan, encouraged members to back him. Schwarz welcomed that help in a primary fight in which the Club for Growth raised at least $150,000 for one of his opponents. "The ability to reach across party lines and find allies in the other party, and in groups that are usually associated with the other party, is a lost art," says Schwarz. "I think it's something that needs to be rediscovered."

Even as Schwarz was talking cooperation, however, the RINO hunters were on the prowl. Come 2006, they noted as soon as this year's results were announced, there will be another primary. And like every other Republican moderate, Joe Schwarz will have a target on his back. ■

BUSH IS BEING SOLD AS A NO-NONSENSE LEADER. SO MUCH FOR TRUTH IN ADVERTISING.

Shh, Don't Tell the Swing Voters

DAVID CORN

The White House, the Bush campaign and Republicans are spending hundreds of millions of dollars this year to convince swing voters that George W. Bush is a decisive, no-nonsense fellow who does what's best for the nation. This, of course, requires loads of spin, subterfuge and truth-stretching. There are books overflowing with evidence proving that Bush's campaign is guilty of massive false advertising. Below is a partial list—much shorter than it could be—of matters Bush's handlers would prefer swing voters not know.

RYAN INZANA

Bush doesn't understand the basics of 9/11. After 9/11, Bush said repeatedly that Al Qaeda had attacked the United States because "they hate our freedoms." But this was a comic-book rendition of the conflict at hand, and it ignored a slew of geopolitical realities and Osama bin Laden's actual (and perverse) motivations. As Anonymous (a CIA analyst who headed the bin Laden desk and whose true identity has been revealed as Michael Scheuer) noted in his new book, *Imperial Hubris*, bin Laden's "attacks are meant to advance bin Laden's clear, focused, limited, and widely popular foreign policy goals"—which include ending US support of Israel and apostate Muslim regimes in Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Egypt and Jordan. "Bin Laden," he writes, "is out to drastically alter US and Western policies toward the Islamic world, not necessarily to destroy America, much less its freedoms and liberties."

Bush is not taking all possible measures to protect the nation. Bush has said that his Administration is doing everything it can to protect the homeland, but it has resisted some obvious steps—particularly when industry has complained. In October 2002, Homeland Security chief Tom Ridge called for mandatory government regulations covering security at chemical plants. An attack at such a facility could lead to massive casualties. But the chemical industry has opposed such a measure, and the White House has done nothing to turn Ridge's idea into reality. The White House has also sided with the aviation industry in blocking legislation that would require airliners to screen cargo carried on passenger flights. About one-fifth of all air cargo transported in the United States is carried aboard passenger flights. But unlike checked baggage, it is rarely screened. How many swing voters realize that when they fly they are sitting above commercial cargo that has not been inspected, thanks in part to Bush?

Bush never bothered to look at the intelligence before launching the Iraq war. In announcing his intention to invade Iraq, Bush said intelligence gathered by the US government "leaves no doubt" that Saddam Hussein possessed WMDs. After the invasion, Bush declared that he had based his decision on "good, solid intelligence." But how did he know that? In a background briefing last summer, White House aides conceded that Bush had never read the ninety-page National Intelligence Estimate on Iraq's WMDs. (The NIE was a flawed document that wrongly stated Iraq had chemical and biological weapons but that also included serious qualifiers and caveats that should have caused a reader to wonder about those conclusions.) This Commander in Chief once told an interviewer he doesn't read newspapers; he also does not read the most comprehensive threat assessments before placing US troops in harm's way.

Bush couldn't cite evidence to support his claim that Saddam was in league with Al Qaeda. Bush partially justified his push for war in Iraq by saying before the invasion that Saddam was "a threat because he is dealing with Al Qaeda." The 9/11 Commission, the House and Senate intelligence committees and the CIA have all reported that there was no evidence of a working relationship between Al Qaeda and the Iraq regime. Rather than acknowledge that he had exaggerated the ties between the two, Bush and his aides have tried to spin facts to support his prewar assertions.

But in July 2003, Bush was specifically asked at a press conference to cite the evidence that backed up his pre-invasion claim that Saddam had been in league with Al Qaeda. He replied, "We've been [in Iraq] for ninety days since the cessation of major military operations. It's going to take time for us to gather the evidence." He had not been asked for *new* evidence. He had been asked for the *initial* evidence that supported one of his primary rationales for war. He could not point to a single thing.

Bush has been doubly dishonest in endangering the nation's fiscal security. Bush has taken fuzzy math to new heights by simultaneously overstating and understating his budget deficits. In February the Bush White House put out an inflated estimate of the deficit ($521 billion) so its more realistic mid-year projection ($445 billion) could then be cited as a sign of progress—even though the latter estimate showed the deficit growing by 19 percent over last year's figure. At the same time, the Administration has finagled the numbers to underestimate the deficit projections for the next five years, claiming it will cut the deficit in half by 2009. As a Goldman Sachs report noted recently, the White House has not included in its estimates the full cost of tax breaks and various programs—such as the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. And a study put out by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the Committee for Economic Development and the Concord Coalition noted that deficits will total $4.6 trillion in the next ten years—more than twice the amount calculated by the Congressional Budget Office. Bush and his aides have blamed 9/11, the recession and the wars for the deficits. But the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that about one-third of these deficits is the result of Bush's tax cuts.

Bush may have a quasi-secret plan to slash social programs. The Bush Administration has considered drastically downsizing the domestic discretionary budget, which covers education, environmental protection, national parks, low-income energy assistance and much more. Budget material developed by the White House earlier this year—but not included in the budget books as is customary—proposed serious cuts in domestic programs over the next five years. In 2009, discretionary domestic programs (outside homeland security) would be cut $45 billion, or 10.4 percent in inflation-adjusted dollars (14 percent, if population growth is taken into account). These cuts would, for example, include lowering the number of low- and moderate-income families receiving childcare assistance by 200,000 to 365,000. By the way, these cuts would hardly improve the deficit situation. Domestic programs (excluding homeland security) make up only one-sixth of the budget. The White House has denied that these hard-to-find documents indicate such budget cuts are actually coming. Yet the White House has instructed department heads to refer to these numbers in submitting their budget proposals.

Bush failed to keep his 2000 promise about tax cuts. While campaigning for the presidency in 2000, Bush said, "The vast majority of my tax cuts go to the bottom end of the spectrum." The reality: Almost half of his first—and biggest—round of tax cuts went to the top 1 percent, according to Citizens for Tax Justice. The bottom 60 percent of taxpayers netted about 13 percent. And according to a recent Congressional Budget Office study, the share of federal taxes paid by the bottom 80 percent has gone up in the Bush II years, while the portion paid by the richest tax-

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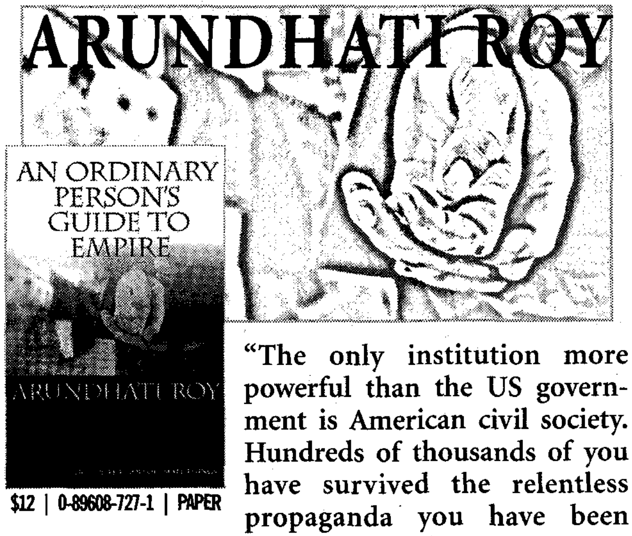
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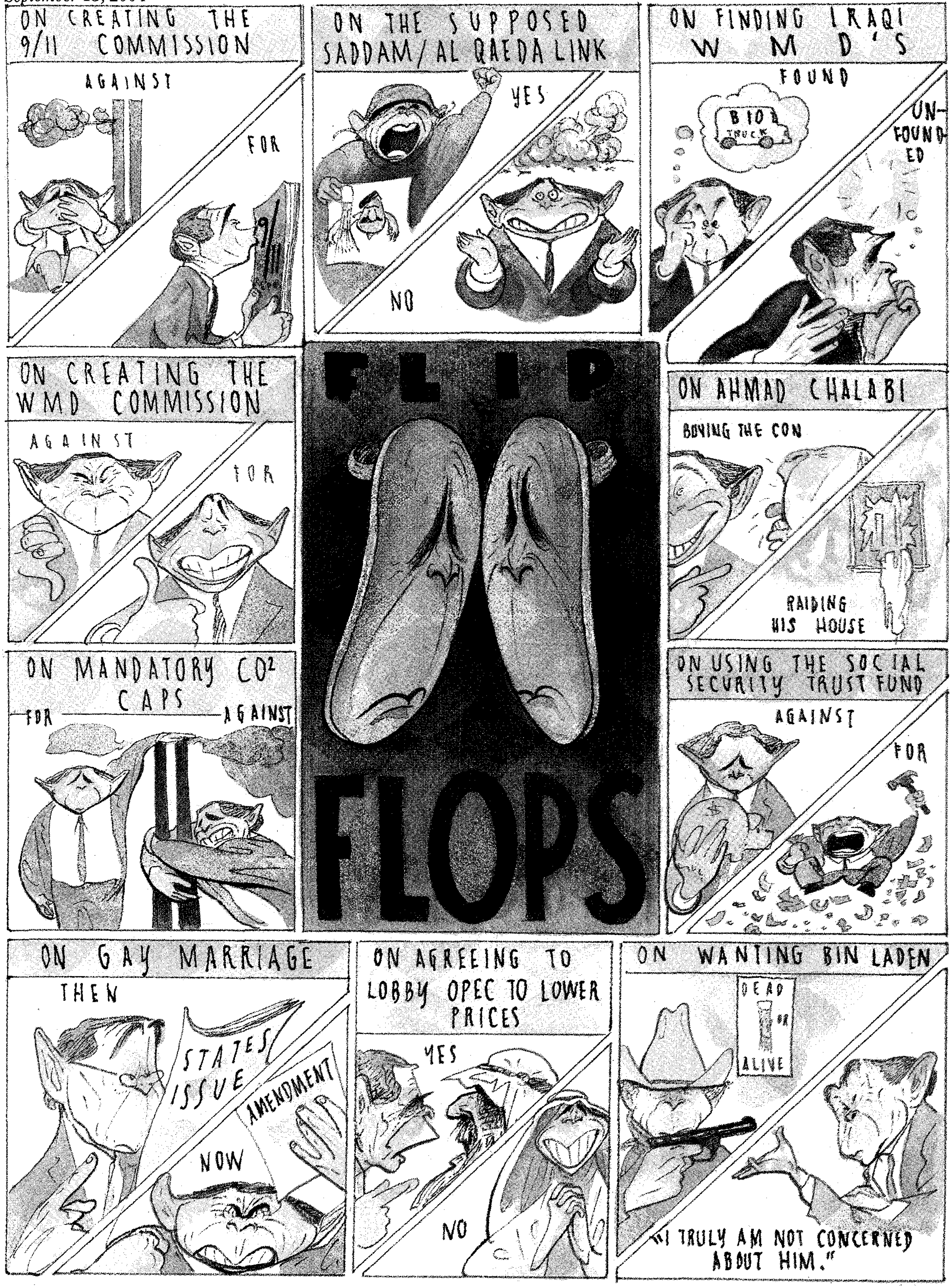
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AGAINST
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THEN
STATES ISSUE
NOW
AMENDMENT
ON AGREEING TO LOBBY OPEC TO LOWER PRICES
YES
NO
ON WANTING BIN LADEN
DEAD OR ALIVE
"I TRULY AM NOT CONCERNED ABOUT HIM."

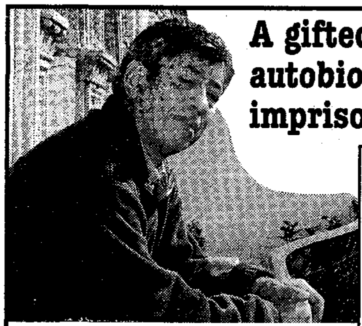
Steve Brodner

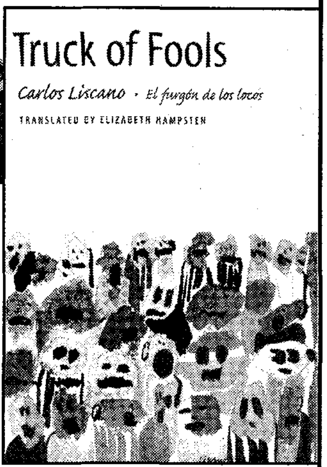
payers has fallen dramatically. Still, Bush has claimed his tax cuts have helped improve the economy and led to the creation of 1.5 million jobs (even though more than 2.5 million jobs have been lost during his presidency). The connection between his tax cuts and jobs creation is a debate for economists. But it is undeniable that since the end of last year, average hourly wages have declined and are now slightly below what they were in November. Wages and salaries are being outpaced by inflation.

Bush avoided answering the hardest questions about his past business deals. The Enron scandal brought attention to Bush's less than glorious history as a businessman, which included several questionable episodes. In one, Harken Energy, a company that bailed out Bush's failing oil firm and placed him on its board, sold a subsidiary to a partnership of Harken insiders to whom it had lent the money to finance this purchase. It was all very Enron-ish, and the point was to understate Harken's losses for the year and keep its stock price inflated. Bush benefited from this sham deal, because soon afterward he sold 212,000 Harken shares and bagged $848,000. (He used these proceeds to pay off a bank loan he had taken to obtain an interest in the Texas Rangers baseball team—an interest that would later earn him $16 million.) What did he know about this untoward transaction, which the SEC later questioned? When reporters in 2002 asked Bush if he had been involved in the bogus deal, he did not reply directly and said, "You need to look back on the directors' minutes." But the minutes were not publicly available, and the White House declined to ask Harken to release them. To date, Bush has not said if he had a role in this transaction. And neither he nor the broker who arranged the sale of Bush's Harken shares has ever identified who bought his shares.

Bush was not only MIA from the National Guard in Alabama; he was missing in Texas, too. The main issue has been whether Bush reported for Guard duty when he was in Alabama in 1972. The available records do not document that he served in Alabama—though limited documents indicate he was paid for a few days of service in October and November 1972 and later showed up for a dental visit at an Alabama base. Citing these incomplete records, the White House has played the missing-in-Alabama issue to a tie. But what has received much less attention is the evidence that Bush skipped out of service for months after he returned from Alabama to Houston. Summaries of his pay records indicate that he was paid for several days of service in the first four months of 1973, but a May 1973 performance review—signed by his immediate supervisors at Ellington Air Base in Houston—said he had not "been observed at this unit" for the past year. And his main file—loaded with information pertaining to his duty at Ellington—has nothing in it about his activity at Ellington for the first months of 1973. This gap is as suspicious as the Alabama hole.

If those mythical swing voters knew all of the above, would they still vote for this guy? Maybe some would still be drawn to his tough-guy, bring-'em-on shtick or his conservative positions. But—lucky for Bush—swing voters often say they are not as informed about the candidates as they would like to be. What a difference it could make if in the the final months of the campaign they were exposed to the full facts, not the campaign's made-for-TV spin. ■





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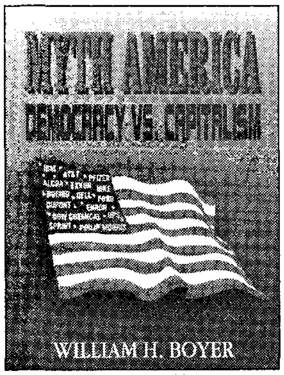

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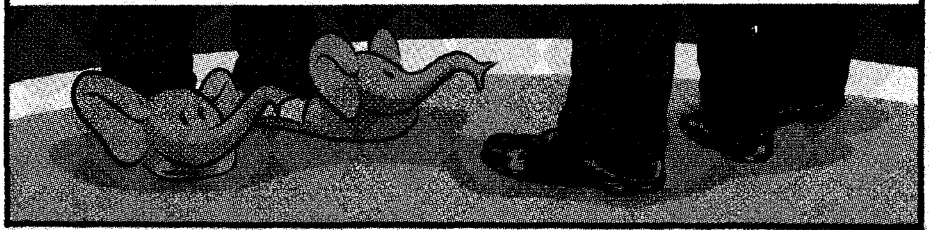
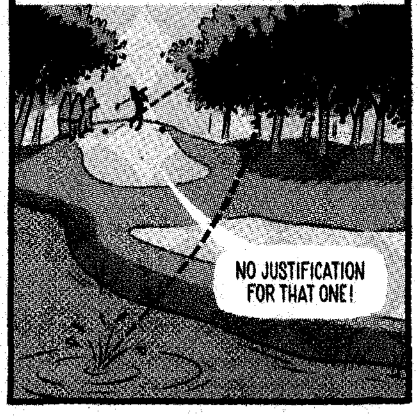
ON AUGUST 6, 2001, MORE THAN A MONTH BEFORE SEPTEMBER 11, THE INFAMOUS "BIN LADEN DETERMINED TO STRIKE WITHIN US" INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING, ALL BUT GUARANTEEING AN IMMINENT TERRORIST ATTACK, LANDED IN THE PRESIDENT'S HANDS.



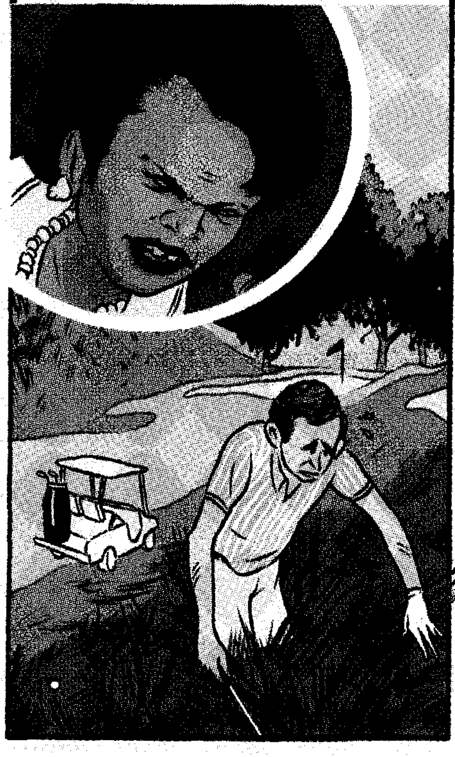
NO MULLIGANS

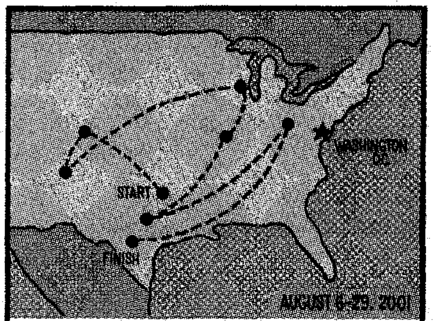
HOW THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION DISREGARDED THE AUGUST 6 PDB

THE VERY NEXT DAY, BUSH WAS SPOTTED PLAYING GOLF AT THE RIDGEWOOD COUNTRY CLUB IN WACO, TX. DURING HIS ROUND, HE JOKED TO REPORTERS ABOUT HIS LOVE OF HOT WEATHER AND HIS AFFINITY FOR MULLIGANS AFTER HITTING BAD SHOTS.


NO JUSTIFICATION FOR THAT ONE!

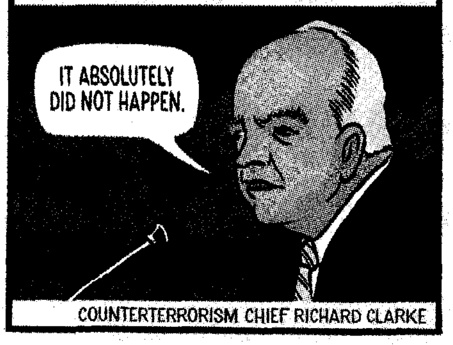
APRIL 8, 2004: WHILE TESTIFYING IN FRONT OF THE 9-11 COMMISSION, WHEN ACCUSED OF IGNORING SUCH AN OBVIOUS THREAT, NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISER CONDOLEEZZA RICE DECLARED THAT THE ADMINISTRATION WAS ALREADY AT "BATTLE STATIONS" AT THE TIME, DOING EVERYTHING IN ITS POWER TO PREVENT A DOMESTIC ATTACK.





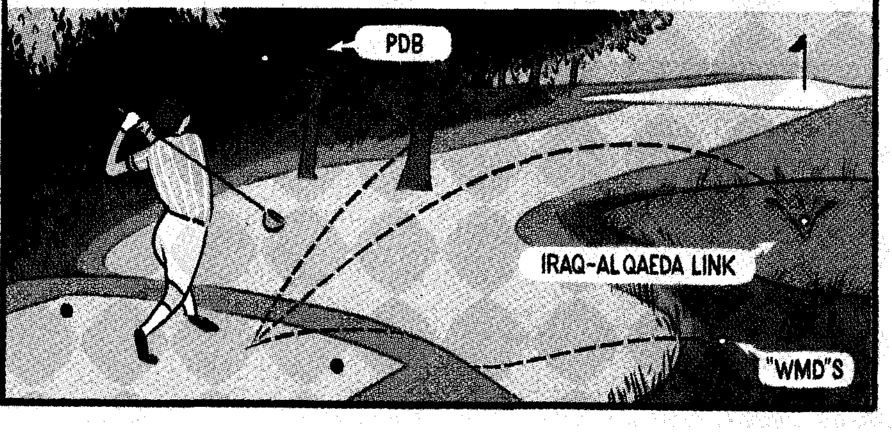
CONSIDERING THE PRESIDENT'S WELL-DOCUMENTED SUMMER VACATION, ONE MIGHT WONDER WHAT TYPE OF "BATTLE STATION" SHE WAS REFERRING TO..

FURTHERMORE, IF THE ADMINISTRATION WERE IN FACT BRACING FOR AN ATTACK, YOU WOULD THINK THAT THEY WOULD RECALL DOING SO.


IT ABSOLUTELY DID NOT HAPPEN.

COUNTERTERRORISM CHIEF RICHARD CLARKE

SINCE THE PDB PUBLIC RELATIONS DISASTER, THE BUSH ADMINISTRATION HAS HAD AN INCREASINGLY DIFFICULT TIME JUSTIFYING THEIR BOTCHED SHOTS. IN THE END THOUGH, IT'S THE WAR ON IRAQ THAT SEEMS TO BE THE REAL SHOT THEY CAN'T TAKE BACK, NO MATTER HOW BAD THE LIE.



Mykola Duzyj

LETTERS

CONTINUED

(Continued From Page 2)

Fortuna, Calif.

■ Since no one can rid the world of terrorists, a never-ending "war" on terrorism is a juvenile concept. Does anyone believe that a "war on drugs" or a "war on poverty" can be won? The vocabulary used to describe today's poor thinking is so absurd that no one should be surprised when tomorrow's adults (today's children) declare "war" on practically everything. The word "war" is being so minimized that a real war will mean even less than Dubya's "war on Iraq" (which is not a war but a weapons-testing program and a live-training exercise). JACK SIVAK

Highland, Ind.

■ William Greider's article on the Orwellian "war on terror" echoes my thoughts. Not only has the public been sucked into this but, even more terrifying, almost every journalist seems to have been sucked into the same vortex. Thus, when anyone criticizes any impact of the "war"—the Patriot Act, the dismissal of the Geneva Conventions, the militaristic approach of urban mayors to protest (at protests in Chicago against the Bush regime, the menacing black turtle outfits of the police make me feel as if I'm in Chile or Argentina—and I've been at this for thirty years), the profiling of Arabs, etc., the Administration is quick to claim "there's a war on." At the same time, the fear and insecurity Greider describes are real—and, I believe, primarily gender-based.

The week of 9/11, I attended a public memorial in Chicago. The crowd was sad and patriotic. But suddenly, the crowd (and in my memory, the men) started chanting "USA, USA," as if we were at a sports rally. The women from my office and I looked at one another, aghast and chilled, and quickly left. I have not been able to shake the memory of that quick turn from sadness to self-justifying anger and to fear that such a mentality is what is giving Bush the support he has among white males. It is what I imagine Hitler's early rallies felt like.

SUSAN ELEUTERIO

Hilo, Hi.

■ In military strategy "terrorism" is simply the use of the "indirect approach." The "direct approach" uses massive numbers of troops, planes, bombs, artillery and tanks. There is no way to defeat the indirect approach unless we depopulate the Muslim world, the goal of the pseudo-Christian/Zionist cadre now in power. The closest comparison is the Algerian war. But the French had a historical and social connection with Algerians. Americans have no interest in Muslim or Arab culture—quite the contrary. Oil is the only booty of the pseudo-Christian Crusade. Greider writes of "fanatical terrorists" throughout the world. What is more fanatical than the "shock and awe" of dropping thousands of tons of depleted uranium on a civilian population? DAVID WILSON

LEADERS DEVOURING THEIR OWN

Devon, England

■ As a footnote to the controversy over Richard Serra's pleasevote.com ad updating Goya's ghoulish *Saturn Devouring One of His Sons* ["Letters, Aug.2/9; Aug. 16/23]: A similar cartoon appeared in the *Independent* in Britain a couple of years ago. But it was not George W. Bush devouring babies—it was Ariel Sharon. Needless to say, there were howls of protest from the usual suspects. The cartoon went on to win a major prize as the best political cartoon of the year. Did this teach the protesters a salutary lesson about the benefits of free speech? No. They raged all the more! MANNA WHITESTONE

CORRECTIONS

■ In Eric Alterman's "The Liberal Media" column in the last issue, the Dow Jones Corporation's total revenue (not profit) topped $1.5 billion.

In the same issue, in Eyal Press's "Closing the 'Religion Gap,'" the national faith-based network Call to Renewal, originally founded by Sojourners and others, does not publish *Sojourners* magazine (see www.sojo.net).

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The Life of the Mind

SUNIL KHILNANI

FLOURISHING: Letters, 1928–1946. By Isaiah Berlin.
Edited by Henry Hardy. Cambridge. 755 pp. $40.

Isaiah Berlin once told his biographer, Michael Ignatieff, that "I have a natural tendency to gossip, to describing things, to noticing things, to interest in human beings and their characters, to interplay between human beings, which is completely independent of my intellectual pursuits." The 700-odd pages of this first of three planned volumes of Berlin's letters testify in spades to the truth of each except the final clause of that sentence. In fact, Berlin's many intellectual pursuits all welled up from his fascination with gossip of the mind. He entered ideas through his feeling for the thinkers who thought them: He was interested in how and why people did things with ideas, not in abstract philosophical patterns.

This accounts both for his own chosen intellectual path—which led him to renounce footnoted philosophy papers in favor of well-turned essays displaying his talent for intellectual empathy, even for minds and milieus he disliked—and for the success he enjoyed progressing up it, in a culture whose educated classes preferred to take their philosophy in biographical rather than analytical dress. Renown came also of course for his political views: A defender of Western capitalism during some of its most dicey years, he became the cold war's house liberal. Although he reveled in complexity and shades, he could also conveniently simplify the world: hedgehog or fox, negative or positive liberty, with us or against us.

This volume of letters—bulging with helpful editorial material—opens with Berlin as an 18-year-old about to go up to Oxford; it ends with him already, at 36, something of a public figure, and about to return to his fellowship at Oxford, having spent several of the war years at the British Embassy in Washington. Much of the life lived in these years seems choiceless: unfolding in that characteristic effortless way of the English upper-class life, where apparently fortuitous (but in fact socially predetermined) encounters and invitations draw one to an unavoidable destination.

Yet the remarkable fact is that Berlin was not pulled from Oxford's gilded genetic pool: He was a Riga-born Jew, a lone and late child of doting parents who, wealthy and in flight from the Bolsheviks, arrived in London in 1921. Dumpy, thickly bespectacled, with a rich accent and a bad arm, he was a dark duckling among the pretty blonds: Isherwood, Auden, Spender, all of them his contemporaries and friends at Oxford. But he had wit, intelligence, charm, extraordinary—sometimes excessive—capacities of self-dramatization and a preternatural self-confidence, his expressed thoughts unmarred by the self-doubt one might have expected of someone in his shoes, all articulated in what he called his "mannered garrulity."

Brimming with gossip and light on ideas, Isaiah Berlin's letters reveal him in all his bitchy, campy, upwardly billowing glory.

We see him developing a taste for both the life of the mind and of the deed, and wavering between them. In Ignatieff's 1998 biography, Berlin resembled a little too closely a Canadian intellectual, and these letters reveal him in all his bitchy, campy, upwardly billowing glory (Louis MacNeice once suggested that the most appropriate gift for Berlin was a "dish of milk"). We encounter here a sophisticated and energetic young

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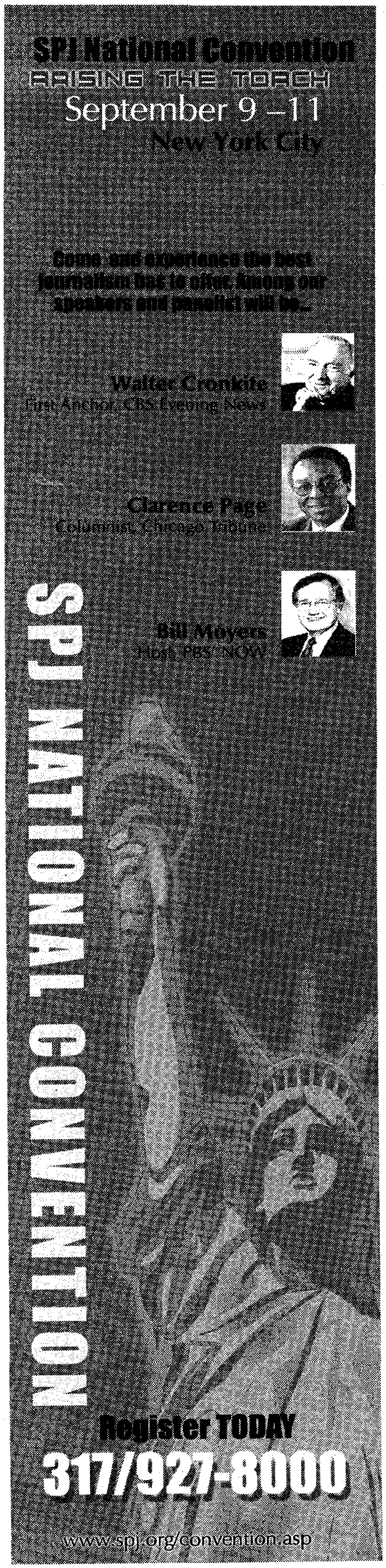
Sunil Khilnani is the author of, among other books, The Idea of India *(Farrar, Straus & Giroux). He is currently at work on a biography of Nehru.*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man on the make, in an Oxford more socially porous than ever before. Like most newcomers, Berlin worked hard to be liked, a trait that was always to fill him with intense self-loathing—since he had quickly enough made his own the English dislike of ingratiation. (One senses perhaps a trace of this self-hatred when Berlin writes of another professor, "I have never met a man so anxious to please, to adapt himself to the strange but distinguished English.")

Berlin was swept up into the circle of Oxford's most eccentric and brightest don, Maurice Bowra, and he quickly absorbed the requisite rankery and clubhouse banter, even rehearsing the diction in which to deliver it. He paraded his new style in his letters. The misliked wife of a don is dismissed as an "Oxford negress," a newly elected fellow of All Souls is "repulsively ugly & looks like a currant & dates merchant," a Bowra witticism is awarded a B+. When it came to social snobbery, though, Oxford had less to teach him, since he could draw on his own White Russian, high-Jewish pedigree. In 1934, traveling for the first time to Palestine, he told his parents that "Tel Aviv is dreadful—like the Klondyke—imagine a whole lot of Jewish gold-diggers suddenly swooping on to the place.... Jews have no taste"; in September 1938, after watching Oxford ladies and wives of college servants come together to assemble gas masks, he wrote to Irish novelist and *saloniste* Elizabeth Bowen: "I more than ever believe in the necessity of preserving standards of civilized life against the frightful warmth & intimacy of wartime cosiness." But he also felt the emotional costs of the "All-Souls smartness" by which he made himself live. Writing to his friend Mary Fisher on the death of her father, the Oxford grandee H.A.L. Fisher, he regretted that "the effect of Oxford is that one loses all power of direct statement or even direct feeling and has to circumnavigate in the hope that the outline of what one is unfortunately not simple enough to say directly, is conveyed, & with it the undescribed content."

At Oxford, he took to the intellectual society more than to the ideas themselves: He treasured the companionship of clever, gifted people, to whom living came easily. The letters testify to his genius for friendship. In a marvelous letter to Ben Nicolson (son of Harold Nicolson and Vita Sackville-West), Berlin defended friendship against the claims of cold intellectualism and the solitary pursuit of artistic glory:

> Proust said that friends were a waste of time & the real world was a private universe into which the artist withdraws with relief. This again holds only of the bruised, the humiliated, the cripples, even when their passion is for the truth alone, & they are men of genius. The paranoia of mystics, poets, & Proustian writers may increase their neurosis to the point of genius, but as quality of life I cannot protest against it more vehemently than I do. And the windows can be kept open only when outside them there are other persons, who are fond of one & of whom one is fond, neither side expecting anything in return...unless one lives among people whose reactions one respects, (& therefore one's own reactions to them are less suspect than in more dubious cases) how can one orientate oneself? & not to do so is the worst of all disasters.

He developed deep loyalties toward Bowra, Felix Frankfurter, Stuart Hampshire, Spender, A.J. Ayer and Bowen—the last in some ways the most unlikely of his friendships, but that with its constant flow of gossip, both tender and malicious, captivated him ("She continues to be a delightful person, understands everything one says, and loves low life, toughs, bloods, and anything violent.... She makes one feel cleverer, more sympathetic, more nicely poised than one is, one cannot talk about nothing, one is kept up to the mark, & she never does not respond at all, but always reacts in some way to all one does or says").

His family he kept well away from his Oxford world. His letters to his parents, while clearly those of a fond son, are also very much those of an *enfant gâté*, and his treatment of his parents can sometimes make awkward reading. He describes an abortive holiday with his mother to an Oxford friend: "This horrible hotel where I came to see my mother—I came for a fortnight, I leave in 5 minutes after 30 hrs—the food is prunes & prawns in aspic and rice pudding"; he agrees to fit his father into his schedule for a few hours over dinner; he complains about his father to his mother ("To work on a holiday with him is impossible—he does not read for more than 3/4 hours at a time *and* he hates to be left alone"); and when pressed by his parents for longer, fuller letters (the title of this volume is taken from the one-word telegrams Berlin devised in order to reassure his parents), he exasperatedly replies, "What on earth am I to describe to you now? My mode of life you know."

Although British reviews have celebrated these letters as fine examples of the art, for the most part they are not. The prose is effluvial, a stream of thoughts and half-thoughts (sometimes too obviously passing), delivered in scarlet-waistcoated

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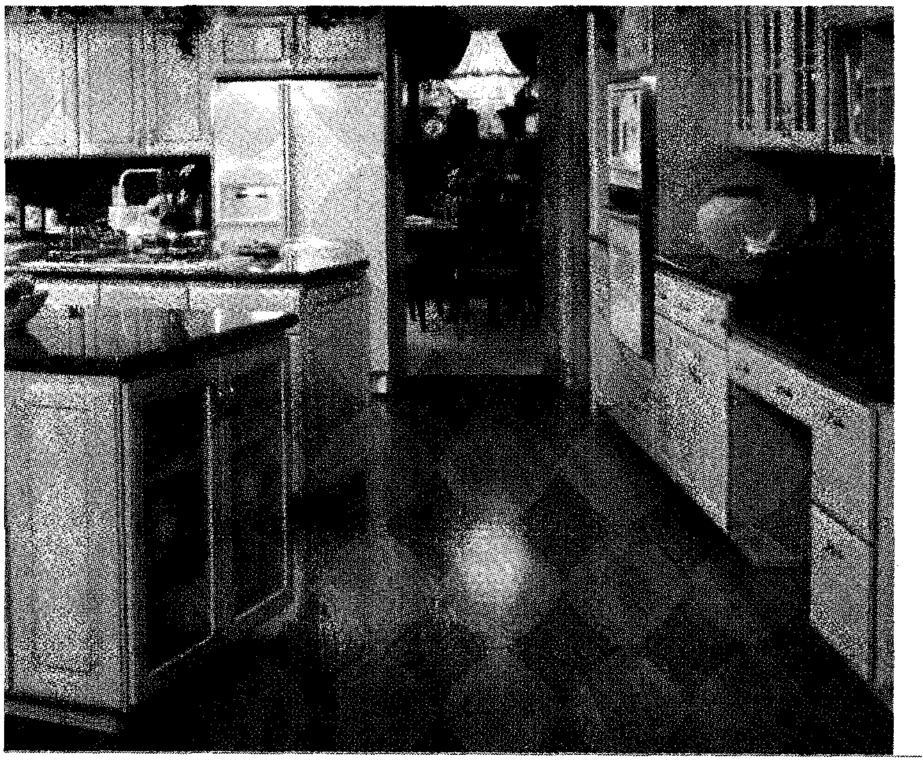

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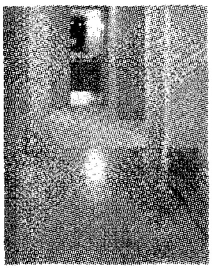

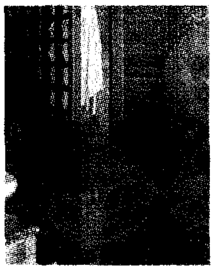

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style. (Perhaps the finest example of his epistolary craft, and a sound model of etiquette should one ever be in a similar predicament, is a hilarious letter written to his hostess after a party, confessing to the unintended thievery of a silver matchbox.) For one who was initially regarded as a philosopher, there are few signs of an instinctive fascination with philosophical problems. Berlin considered himself a failure as a philosopher (though a happy failure), and by the standards of twentieth-century professional philosophy, he was. He was interested in dimensions of life that resist systematization: original thought, literature, politics, conversation, friendship, statesmanship, judgment. In the course of these letters we see him coming to a realization that he did not want to pursue formal philosophy any further. Instead, he allowed himself to be pulled in different directions by his various interests: His intellectual life was by invitation ("hailed like a taxi," as he put it)—this was how his major project of these years, a biographical study of Karl Marx, came about.

A large chunk of this volume contains letters written while Berlin was living in America—he went there for the first time in the summer of 1940, to join the British Embassy. America utterly depressed him. "There is no social mystery, no special social mazes which in principle cannot be represented by a definite plan, as eg Oxford, Cambridge, Bloomsbury," he wrote to Mary Fisher, "...everything is stated. If you omit, you are politely but relentlessly pressed for it.... I passionately long to [come] home," while to another friend he gave a still gloomier picture: "That America is hateful I hardly have to tell you. The inhabitants have no souls, only hearts at the most. Everybody is enormously relentlessly boring in a sense which extends the concept of the activity. They are all guilty, uneasy, frightened, brazen, stupid, muddled and generally intolerable.... I...have the reputation in America—you won't believe it—for melancholy & neurosis." At best, he could assure his parents that "Mother would like America v. much: open, vigorous, 2x2=4 sort of people, who want yes or no for an answer. No nuances. Food is superb everywhere." Yet he slowly came to appreciate the "brimming vitality" of the Americans, and to his surprise developed an avid interest in American politics, which he explained to his parents "must be because American political life is very personal in quality. Institutions play a far smaller part than individuals, and relations between individuals, the pattern of which is so strongly laid in Oxford itself, has, of course, always fascinated a gossip-loving character like me."

Berlin is now a canonized saint of the liberal intelligentsia, but it was never entirely clear just what sort of liberalism he stood for. His horror of "yes or no" went deep, and the letters fully indulge a habit that stayed with him: an intellectual evasiveness, an unwillingness to settle—or to be seen to settle—a position. That was part of his charm, a sign of his cultivated sense of the many-sidedness of the world. Yet it was also characteristic of Berlin to append his vortex of subordinate clauses to sharp dichotomies and alternatives. Hence the paradoxical effect often produced by reading him: the proximity of philosophical profundity to political simplicity.

The event that defined Berlin's political views was not the Holocaust or Nazism but 1917, which he saw as nothing but a world-historical catastrophe. Berlin's own cold war began then and continued for him till his death in 1997—unconnected to actual history. The great political subjects of the day certainly enter into these letters: The war and the fight against Nazism revealed to him that "the private world has cracked in numerous places," and while in America he was drawn into circles of Zionist argument. And yet they have a remote quality. "I don't understand world movements, & everyone seems to be blandly discussing the imminent collapse of European civilization, though I cannot see what can possibly be meant," Berlin confessed in 1935.

In fact, in political terms his liberalism consisted entirely of a deep antipathy toward totalitarianism—a position that at certain moments in the twentieth century required a degree of pluck (though perhaps less so in the senior common rooms of Oxford or the committee chambers of the British Academy) and reflected good character traits, but was hardly an intellectually difficult one to hold. Unlike some of his fellow European intellectual émigrés to Britain—Hayek, Popper, Gellner—Berlin remained entirely uninterested either in economic questions (what relationship might exist between capitalism and the variety of liberty he defended?) or in wider concerns about the nature of the social order. These letters abundantly display Berlin's intelligence and charm, but they also presage the limits of his political horizon. His natural milieus were seats of power—intellectual, cultural, political—and his later life was to be spent gliding between Oxford and his rooms at the Albany Hotel in London. Easy with power, beloved by its wielders, he would not be its critic. ■

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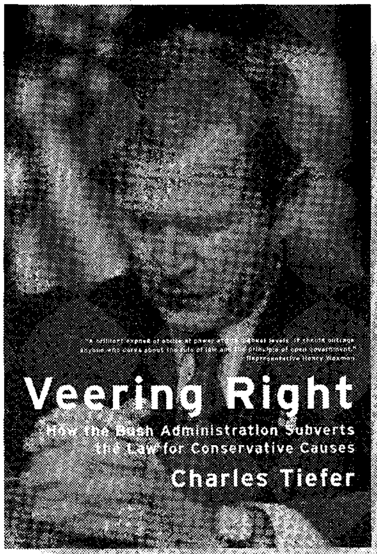
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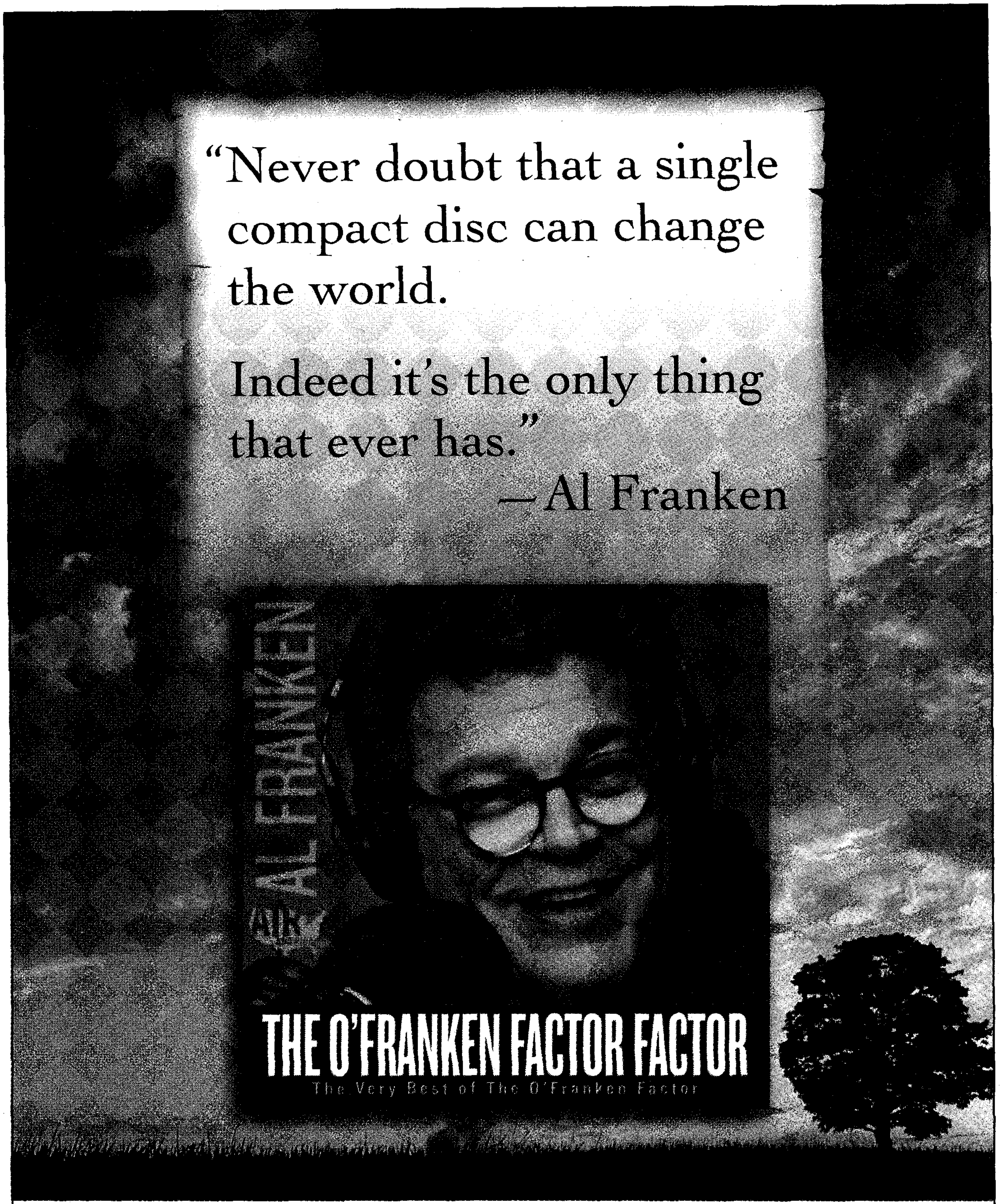
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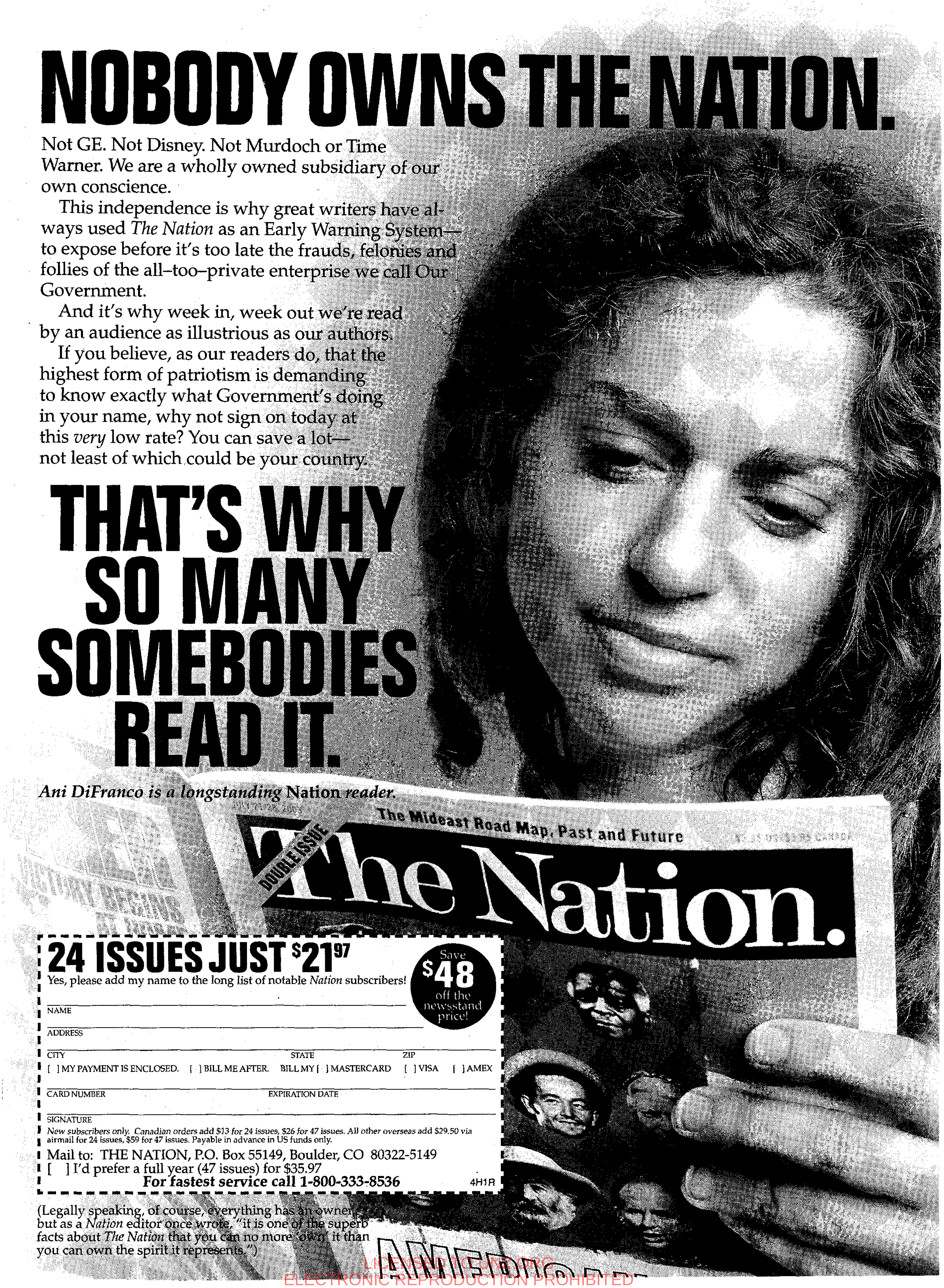

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Lewis of Arabia

CHARLES GLASS

FROM BABEL TO DRAGOMANS: Interpreting the Middle East.
By Bernard Lewis. Oxford. 352 pp. $28.

I have witnessed what Bernard Lewis, and later Samuel Huntington, designated the "clash of civilizations" between Christendom and Islam up close in at least two wars. One was the Lebanese civil war that erupted in the spring of 1975, pitting universal values and tolerance against sectarianism and fanaticism. The other took place in Bosnia, where the adherents of pluralism and equality battled racists and ethnic cleansers. Both wars fit the clash paradigm, but not as Lewis and Huntington fashioned it. In Lebanon and Bosnia, the partisans of equality and democracy were nominally Muslim—their opponents defiantly Christian.

The schema of civilizational collision that Professor Lewis posited in his landmark September 1990 *Atlantic Monthly* contribution, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," omits both Lebanon and Bosnia. Republished here alongside fifty other essays on Islam, history and politics, Lewis's best-known polemic cites conflicts that undermine his contention that enlightened Christendom is locked in a near-eternal battle with the dark forces of Islam. The reason, he writes, for the global Christian-Muslim tension is that "for [non-Muslim] misbelievers to rule over true believers is blasphemous and unnatural, since it leads to the corruption of religion and morality in society.... This may help us to understand the current troubles in such diverse places as Ethiopian Eritrea, Indian Kashmir, Chinese Sinkiang, and Yugoslav Kosovo, in all of which Muslim populations are ruled by non-Muslim governments." Alas, his conceptual framework prevents any understanding of the lands he mentions. In "Ethiopian" Eritrea, a secular liberation front headed by a Christian named Isaias Afewerki achieved independence from then-Marxist Ethiopia after thirty years of struggle. When I covered that war, the guerrillas never mentioned religion as relevant to their demand for independence. The operative fact was that Eritrea had been an Italian colony from 1889. At the end of the Second World War, the Allies awarded Italy's former colony to the Ethiopian emperor, Haile Selassie, without consulting its inhabitants. Most Eritreans—Muslim, Christian and animist—rejected absorption into Haile Selassie's Amharic empire and, later, the Marxist terror state of the Dergue, which overthrew him. By the end, Eritrean Marxists were battling fellow Marxists from Addis Ababa. As for Yugoslav Kosovo, Muslims sought independence from Belgrade not as adherents of Islam but as Albanians fearful of annihilation. Kosovo's Serb minority had—and justifiably still has—the same fear. The Albanians who persecute them today are Muslim and Christian, believer and atheist. Sinkiang's struggle for freedom bears a greater resemblance to Buddhist Tibet's than to Kashmir's. And the Kashmiris have suffered almost as much from the depredations of their Muslim neighbors in Pakistan as from their Hindu overlords in New Delhi.

Lewis's insistence that "for misbelievers to rule over true believers is blasphemous" does not explain why millions of Muslims—many of them devout—have chosen to live under nonbelievers in France, Germany, Britain and the United States. Their migration stems more from poverty, insecurity and oppression in the countries they left than from any desire to expand the realm of Muslim rule. If anything, Muslim émigrés came west to avoid life under contemporary Muslim dictators. Lewis himself points out that, in centuries past, dissident Christians and Jews sought similar tolerance under the Ottoman banner, far from the religious despots of Christian Europe. They were no more taking sides in a millennial boxing match than are the majority of today's Muslim expatriates in the West. In pre-partition India, most of the Muslim ulema—the community of jurists and scholars—opposed the establishment of Muslim Pakistan, and they knew a united India would have left all the country's Muslims under Hindu rule. Crusades and jihads are less common than battles between states in alliance with monarchs of other religions. Christian Britain fought in the Crimea alongside Muslim

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Charles Glass (www.charlesglass.net) is the author of Money for Old Rope, *a collection of dispatches on the Middle East.*

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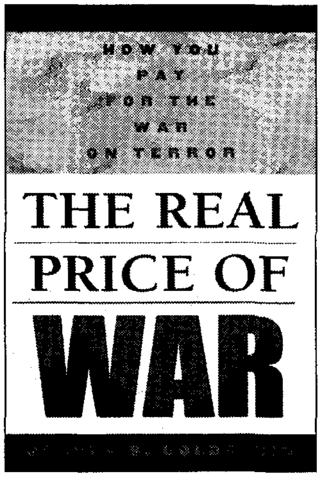

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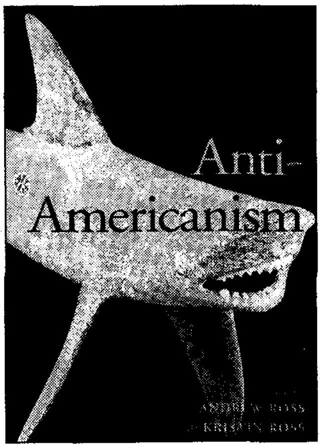

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Turkey against Christian Russia and its Muslim levies. Syria and Egypt sent troops to help the United States expel Iraq from Kuwait in 1991.

Despite his misbegotten forays into contemporary political discussion—the latest being his passionate advocacy of the American invasion of Iraq—Bernard Lewis remains the Grand Old Man of Oriental Letters. Emily Yoffe, writing in *Slate* three years ago, spoke for her fellow mesmerized Lewisites, “When he is gone, there will be no one with his depth and breadth to pick up his mantle.” Lewis, she claimed, was “one-stop shopping for baffled Westerners needing a coherent worldview to explain our current situation.” Coherent or not, he was required reading for those of us taking courses in Middle East studies at American universities in the 1960s and ’70s. (He moved from London’s School of Oriental and African Studies to Princeton in 1974. Some teachers may still require his works, although I hope they include correctives like Edward Said, Albert Hourani, David Hirst and Tom Segev.) Another assigned writer from the old Orientalist school was Sir Hamilton (H.A.R.) Gibb, Lewis’s mentor during his undergraduate years at the School of Oriental and African Studies. Lewis recalls in the introduction to *From Babel to Dragomans* that Gibb asked him in 1937, four years after he began to study the Middle East, “Don’t you think it’s time you saw the place?” On the evidence of these essays, originally published between the 1950s and last year, he should visit the place again. He might also read some of its writers, like Naguib Mahfouz or Adonis or David Grossman, who have not been dead for several centuries.

In “On Occidentalism and Orientalism” (one of two previously unpublished pieces in this jumbled collection), Lewis defends his craft as Orientalist, a term of academic opprobrium since Edward Said published *Orientalism* in 1978. Answering Said’s charges, he writes, “We may first look at this curious word, ‘orientalist.’ The word was created, as are so many, by analogy, after the model of such earlier terms as Latinist, Hellenist or Hebraist. A Latinist was one who studied Latin texts, a Hellenist one who studied Greek texts and so on. I am not aware that there has been any objection on the part of the Latins or the Hellenes to being studied in this way nor to having the studies so designated.” Lewis came to history as a linguist, having learned ancient Hebrew in England in preparation for his bar mitzvah before graduating to the modern Hebrew then taking root in Palestine’s Zionist colonies. Next came Aramaic, Arabic, Turkish, Greek and Latin. As philologist, he does not distinguish between dead and living languages—between biblical and contemporary Hebrew, or between Homeric Greek and modern Greek. If the Latins and Hellenes do not object to his investigations, and to the generalizations he bases on them, the reason is that they no longer exist. Arabs, Turks and Israelis do. Using the pathologist’s scalpel to diagnose the living, he is surprised when the patient screams.

Lewis’s contribution to general knowledge comes from his pointillist and endearing discoveries in the study of Islamic and Ottoman history—like the relative unimportance Muslim chroniclers attached to their defeat by the French at Tours in AD 732, called by Christians a “turning point in the struggle between Christendom and Islam,” and the reminiscences of an Iraqi priest on a tour of Spanish America in the seventeenth century. A scholar has to dig to find these gems, and Lewis is fortunate to read them in the languages of their authors. The civilian ideologues in the Pentagon who sit at his feet, however, are less interested in his thoughts on Fatimids and Safavids than in the name he gave to their view of the world. For the new guardians of Manifest Destiny, his “clash of civilizations” has a twofold appeal. First, it is simple, like Fukuyama’s “end of history,” an advertising slogan that obscures the product it’s selling. Second, it provides the powerful with academic legitimacy for wars they would pursue anyway. By setting contemporary conflicts, like those between the United States and Middle Eastern actors, within an age-old contest rooted in primordial hatred, it prescribes as much as it describes. The public is encouraged to view war as inevitable, if not desirable. If Lewis had challenged the assumptions on which Dick Cheney, Donald Rumsfeld and Paul Wolfowitz waged war, they would have invited some other court academic to articulate their prejudices. There are countless takers in academe willing to assume that role. When Ahmad Chalabi passed on to the Washington junta Iraqi defectors with *Arabian Nights* tales of Saddam Hussein’s illegal weapons, their ears were open. When Chalabi later accused Washington’s hawks of misgoverning Iraq, they raided his house and threatened him with arrest. It is a fair bet that Lewis would be dropped from the White House guest list if he counseled nonintervention in Middle East affairs, although that is exactly what he was recommending in 1957, when he stumbled across the clash-of-civilizations talisman.

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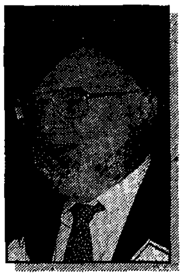

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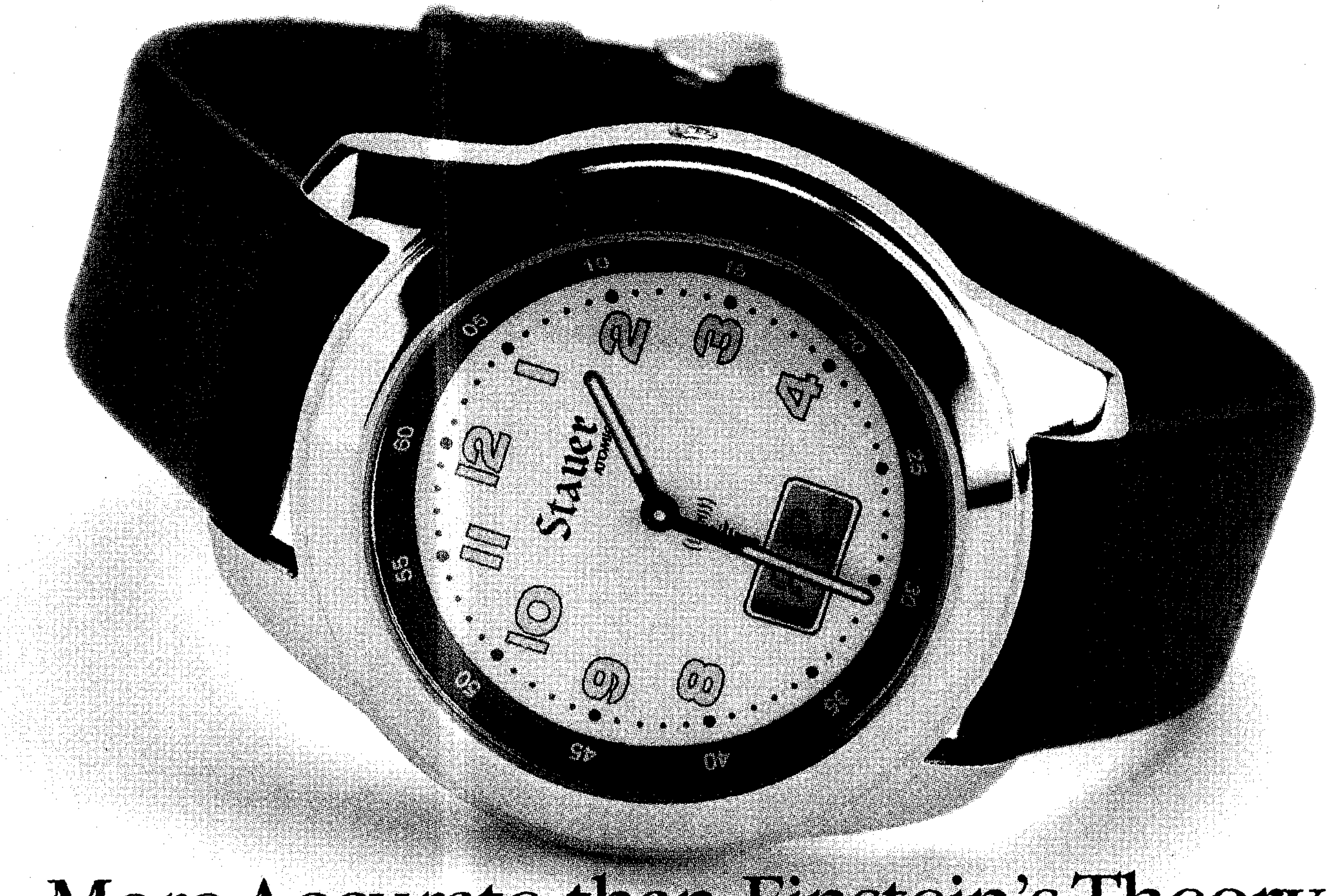
It was in 1957 that Lewis first declared, to a Middle East conference at Johns Hopkins University, "We shall be better able to understand this situation if we view the present discontents of the Middle East not as a conflict between states or nations, but as a clash between civilizations." Then, his view did not imply open warfare. "What action should the Western states take in the present Middle East situation?" he asked. "My own answer would be: as little as possible." Even then, there were more obvious clashes in the Middle East, as elsewhere, than any between civilizations. The world from which imperial Europe was gradually and reluctantly withdrawing pitted rich against poor, modernizers against traditionalists, socialists against royalists, imperialists against anticolonialists, and Western oil companies against hungry *indigènes*. In 1957 the United States, in particular, was more popular in the Arab world than it is today. It had just forced the British, French and Israelis to withdraw from Egypt. It had yet to invade any Arab state. Although it had overthrown a popular Iranian prime minister, Mohammed Mossadegh, for the crime of nationalizing his country's oil resources, it had yet to arouse the hostility of Muslim zealots. In fact, the United States was fundamentalist Islam's greatest benefactor. It used the mosque to offset the secularizing appeal of the "godless" Soviet Union and local socialists. Lewis's clash was undetectable to Washington's foreign policy elite in 1957, except as it applied to monolithic Communism. The Christendom-Islam split found an audience among American cold warriors only when they lost their Soviet nemesis and Lewis resuscitated the notion in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1990. What better opiate than an enemy in the form of another civilization that had always resisted the West? Lewis wrote, repeating his theme of thirty-three years before, "This is no less than a clash of civilizations—the perhaps irrational but surely historic reaction of an ancient rival against our Judeo-Christian heritage, our secular present, and the worldwide expansion of both." This was no new enemy, it was an adversary culled from antiquity.

Still, Lewis remained cautious about launching a violent crusade: "It is crucially important that we on our side should not be provoked into an equally historic but also equally irrational reaction against that rival." By December 2001, in the aftermath of the apocalyptic September 11 atrocities, he was urging war: "A military action carefully designed so as neither to suffer casualties nor to inflict them on the enemy may be seen as a noble example of civilized compassion. It does not, however, carry much conviction among regimes where such qualms are not shared or even understood. They would attribute such restraint to reasons other than compassion, and draw the appropriate inference…of fear and irresolution." Within a year, in the *Wall Street Journal*, Lewis was calling for an invasion to depose Saddam Hussein: "The crucial question here is not how or by whom Saddam is removed, but what comes in his place." What came in his place were chaos, a costly American occupation and insecurity on a scale the Iraqis had never before experienced. Plus more than 10,000 dead and counting.

Muslim anger with the West is, on Lewis's reading, somehow unique in the modern world. "Globalization," he wrote in a November 2001 *New Yorker* piece that is not included here, "has become a major theme in the Arab media, and it is almost always raised in connection with American economic penetration." In fact, globalization is a "major theme" everywhere, "raised in connection with American economic penetration" in Paris as often as in Cairo, in Caracas as much as in Kuala Lumpur. There is nothing uniquely Muslim about it. The same *New Yorker* essay accuses Muslims of selective opposition to "imperialist aggression" and of a "muted response" to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. Yet tens of thousands of Muslims joined the jihad against Soviet occupation, compared with the small number of foreign Muslims who fought against, say, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza. "Ironically," Lewis continues, "it was the United States, in the end, that was left to orchestrate an Islamic response to Soviet imperialism in Afghanistan." What is ironic about the capitalist superpower organizing a response to an invasion by its Communist rival? After all, America had the experience of using the fundamentalist Muslim Brotherhood against the secular Egyptian president Gamal Abdel Nasser, and backing the extreme Wahhabi Saudi royal family against democratic reformers in the oil kingdom.

Lewis's evident sympathy for Israel renders him impervious to any Arab interpretation of events. He condemns those in the West who occasionally fall for Arab propaganda and complains of double standards. His prime example of both is the comparative reaction, as he sees it, to two massacres in 1982—the Syrian Army's assault on the city of Hama and the killings in the Beirut refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila by Israeli-backed Christian Phalangists. He writes:



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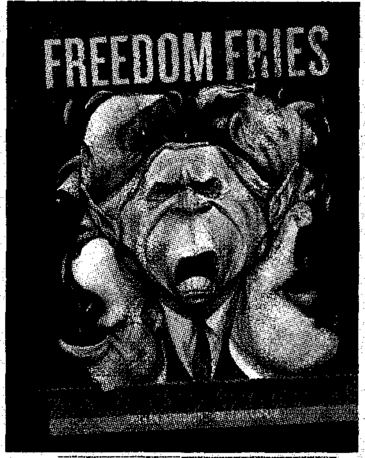

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> The troubles in Hama began with an uprising headed by the radical group the Muslim Brothers in 1982. The government responded swiftly. Troops were sent, supported by armor, artillery, and aircraft, and within a very short time they had reduced a large part of the city to rubble. The number killed was estimated, by Amnesty International, at somewhere between ten thousand and twenty-five thousand. The action...did not prevent the United States from subsequently courting [Syrian President Hafez al-] Assad.

He goes on:

> The massacre of seven hundred to eight hundred Palestinian refugees in Sabra and Shatila that same year was carried out by Lebanese militiamen, led by a Lebanese commander who subsequently became a minister in the Syrian-sponsored Lebanese government, and it was seen as a reprisal for the assassination of the Lebanese President[-elect] Bashir Gemayel. Ariel Sharon, who at the time commanded the Israeli forces in Lebanon, was reprimanded by an Israeli commission of inquiry for not having foreseen and prevented the massacre, and was forced to resign from his position as Minister of Defense.

Lewis proceeds to decry the West for condemning Sharon. "It is understandable," he writes, "that the Palestinians and other Arabs should lay sole blame for the massacre on Sharon. What is puzzling is that Europeans and Americans should do the same. Some even wanted to try Sharon for crimes against humanity." What are the real differences between the two massacres? In Hama, the Muslim Brothers launched a revolt that, had it succeeded, would have led to the overthrow of the regime and the establishment of a Sunni Muslim fundamentalist republic in Damascus. The Brothers murdered Baath Party and municipal officials, and they called for pogroms against the Alawite minority, whose military elite governs the country. The army responded to the Islamic resistance much as the American armed forces did in Falluja, albeit with greater ferocity. The Hama assault produced thousands of civilian casualties, many of which could have been avoided.

Fewer people died in Sabra and Shatila, as Lewis observes, but the entire population was unarmed and undefended following the evacuation of PLO forces from Lebanon. Sharon had given his word to Philip Habib, President Reagan's envoy, that he would not invade West Beirut or attack the refugee camps. He did both. His forces delivered the Christian militias, who had a history of massacring unarmed Palestinians, to the gates of the camps and protected them while they butchered men, women and children. If the United States expressed anger at Sharon, it was because he destroyed American credibility in the Middle East. His invasion of West Beirut and the massacres he oversaw forced the United States to return the Marines, who had supervised the departure of the PLO's fighters, to Beirut to protect the camps. There, they succumbed to the biggest suicide bombing of the time. Some Americans may have courted Assad after Hama, but the US Treasury subsidized Israel's occupation of Lebanon, the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights despite Sabra and Shatila. Americans had reason to demand legal behavior from a state on their payroll. Moreover, Israel's Kahan Commission did not reprimand Sharon "for not having foreseen and prevented the massacre." It held him "indirectly responsible" for everything that happened. He may have resigned as defense minister, but he remained in the Cabinet. He is now prime minister, and George Bush refers to him as "a man of peace." There are double standards, but not those Lewis claims to detect.

While neglecting to explain in his introduction why the order of essays jumps from 2003 to 1978 to 1972 and back to 1993, Lewis litters this book with errors and contradictions. The contradictions are perhaps inevitable in diverse works spanning fifty years, but they make for difficult reading. Take a few examples. In a 1972 essay, "An Interpretation of Fatimid History," Lewis writes that the Fatimid caliphate in Cairo sent missionaries to the eastern Islamic world to win converts to Shiite Islam. He counts the creation of the office of the "Chief Missionary" in Cairo as a breakthrough, establishing "something previously unknown to Islam—an institutional church." This interesting insight is then contradicted elsewhere in the volume in an undated and "previously unpublished paper" titled "From Pilgrims to Tourists": "Muslims did not engage in organized missionary activity." Were there missionaries or not? There certainly are now, making Islam the fastest-expanding religion in the world.

Another 1972 essays says, "In a very real sense modern Hebrew is a reincarnation of Yiddish—the same soul in a new lexical body." This assertion, while not necessarily of political import, is at variance with the history of modern Hebrew. Those who performed the miracle of reviving a language nearly three millennia dead did so with the explicit objective of displacing Yiddish and all it represented in Jewish consciousness—the culture of exile, the authenticity of the Diaspora experience and the character of the "Yid," so detested by early Zionists like Zeev Jabotinsky. Hebrew contributed to the creation of a new man free of the ghetto in Theodor Herzl's "old-new" land. David Gruen of Plonsk was one of many who, in an act of secular baptism, abandoned his Yiddish name for the prouder Hebrew Ben-Gurion. There is no mention, let alone comparison, of the Yiddish literature of writers like Isaac Bashevis Singer with the modern Hebrew works of A.B. Yehoshua and Amos Kenan or with Arab Hebrew writers like Salman Natour, Emil Habibi and Sayed Kashua. Yet if modern Hebrew is the reincarnation of Yiddish, he must show a relationship rather than what the Hebrew pioneers claim to have achieved, a rupture. Lewis could be making an original argument, but it is no more than a statement that is at best contentious and at worst plain wrong.

Similarly, he says of music in the Middle East that only the cities of Turkey and Israel are on the "international concert circuit." He writes, "Elsewhere in the Middle East, those who compose, perform or even listen to Western music are still relatively few." Although hardly a matter of political significance, this is nonetheless false and, like his statement on modern Hebrew, asserted without evidence. My own memories of packed houses for the Cairo Opera, symphonies in Beirut and at the Baalbek Festival and auditions for the Damascus Conservatory lead me to the opposite conclusion. Classical music lovers are no fewer in the Middle East than they are in America's Midwest: a minority, but of a respectable size. The West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, established by Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim, includes talented young classical musicians from the Arab world and Israel. Lewis's East, even when it comes to music, is not the East as it is but as he imagines it should be—a place where terror is endemic and irrational—if it is to remain in polar, violent opposition to his West.

Writing of the Medieval Assassins in "Religion and Murder in the Middle East," Lewis quotes a thirteenth-century Persian poet's words: "By one single warrior on foot a king may be stricken with terror, though he own more than a hundred thousand horsemen." From that, he concludes, "that expresses, vividly and simply, the self-perception of the political assassin, or, as we might say nowadays, of the terrorist." He equates the Assassins with modern Islamic terrorists and locates them in the same countries, Syria and Iran. (Never mind that the Syrian and Iranian governments both detest Osama bin Laden, and that Al Qaeda has long based its operations in Afghanistan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and other countries where the Assassins never worked.) There is a significant difference between the political assassin, who terrorizes leaders, and the terrorist, who frightens the general population. Sir Steven Runciman, in his *History of the Crusades*, noted that the Assassins killed far fewer people than did the Crusaders or the Muslim princes they battled. They raided no towns, sacked no villages and planted no bombs in public places. Runciman regarded them as more humane than the political leaders who murdered tens of thousands to achieve their ends. Assassination by the Ismaili brethren of Syria and Iran distinguished itself from terror in that it was focused, deliberate and harmless to innocent civilians. (Israel's "targeted assassinations," like those by the United States in Iraq, often cause more innocent deaths than those of the putative "targets.") Crusader and Muslim kings were terrified of them, but the general populations were not. Contemporary suicide bombers, in contrast, frighten everyone.

The book's title, *From Babel to Dragomans*, derives from one of the more interesting essays in this collection, a 1998 lecture on language, interpreters and translators in the Middle East from biblical times. Out of linguistic confusion emerged those who interpret one people, its culture and its worldview to another. The dragoman, translator, begins in Genesis as the Hebrew *melitz*; "more often it means something like intercessor or advocate or even ambassador." *Melitz* was translated into Aramaic, the lingua franca of Greater Syria by the time of Christ, as *meturgeman*. In Arabic, this was *turjuman* and the Turkish dragoman. The Ottoman dragoman became a broker and fixer for Europeans traveling or trading in the Ottoman Empire. Many grew rich. The Ottomans appointed Jews and later Christians, whose children studied abroad and learned European languages, to perform this delicate task until the Turks could do it themselves. Lewis is at his best here, making apposite observations about the development of this necessary bridge among cultures. He may see himself as a kind of dragoman—hence his choice of title. But, as nineteenth-century Western travelers like Alexander Kinglake in *Eothen* and Mark Twain in *Innocents Abroad* noted, the dragoman usually forswore an accurate translation in favor of what he believed his employers wanted to hear. ■

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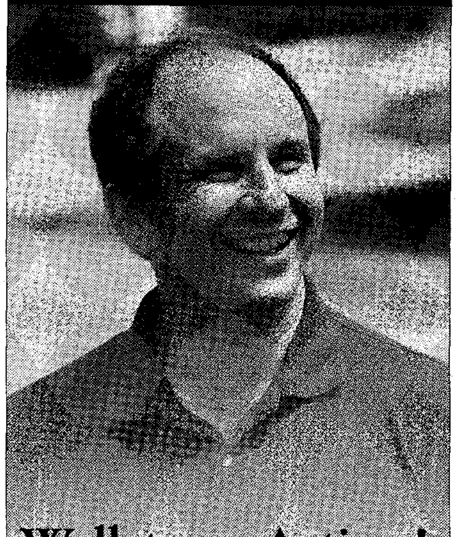

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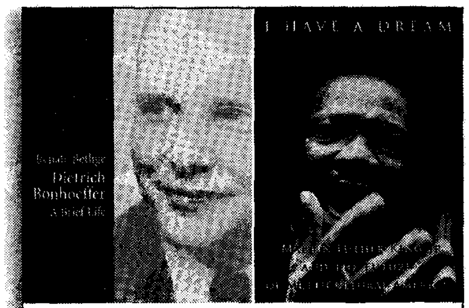

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The Big Sleep

SHEILA M. ROTHMAN

THE SECRET EPIDEMIC: The Story of AIDS and Black America.
By Jacob Levenson. Pantheon. 307 pp. $25.

THE INVISIBLE PEOPLE: How the U.S. Has Slept Through the Global AIDS Pandemic, the Greatest Humanitarian Catastrophe of Our Time. By Greg Behrman. Free Press. 352 pp. $25.

THE AIDS PANDEMIC: Complacency, Injustice and Unfulfilled Expectations.
By Lawrence O. Gostin. North Carolina. 445 pp. $34.95.

From its inception, the AIDS pandemic has generated extraordinary expressions of sadness and anger. The sadness is easy to understand. The disease kills young men and women and the newborns of infected parents. Some of the poorest and most vulnerable people have become infected and then infected friends and strangers. The anger, too, was there from the start. It could be heard in the chants and demands of ACT UP protesters as they picketed the FDA; it could be seen in the faces of dying mothers who did not have kin to care for their children about to be orphaned. As the numbers of people infected with the disease continues to rise, the sadness and the anger persist.

Science has not lived up to our grandiose expectations. Although combinations of antiretroviral drugs now extend the lives of many people with AIDS, we still lack treatments that would eliminate the virus and an effective vaccine that would protect against the disease. But whatever the shortcomings of science, they are more than matched by those of public health officials and policy-makers. Strategies to alter behavior to prevent the spread of the disease have proved only sporadically effective. Decades later, millions of people who are HIV-positive do not have access to treatment and do not know how to protect themselves; many are not even aware they are carriers of the disease.

Starting from these dismal facts in their new books on the AIDS crisis, Jacob Levenson, Greg Behrman and Lawrence Gostin all try to explain why, despite its considerable resources and expertise, the United States has done such a poor job of containing and treating the disease both at home and abroad. Levenson, a freelance journalist and grantee of the Open Society Institute, wants to understand why so many black Americans are dying of AIDS. Behrman, a staff member of the Council on Foreign Relations, wants to understand why we have not been able to devise and "implement a comprehensive global response that would reduce the death rate from AIDS in the developing world." Gostin, a professor of law and public health who has written for almost twenty years on AIDS policy, has brought together his many essays in an effort to understand past failures and future possibilities. The United States, the authors believe, has the skills and the resources to meet the challenge of AIDS and to extend the lives of the world's poorest and most vulnerable citizens. That we have not done so, they argue, reflects our selfishness and prejudices—a charge that cannot be easily dismissed.

Levenson's *Secret Epidemic* investigates why a disease initially identified with gay white men is now devastating minority communities. Blacks were always disproportionately represented among people with AIDS, but never to the current degree. Blacks are ten times more likely to die of AIDS than whites. In 2002, 54 percent of all new HIV cases were African-Americans; 58 percent of all women with AIDS and 59 percent of all children with AIDS were African-Americans. AIDS is the leading cause of death among African-American men between the ages of 25 and 44.

Levenson initially sought his answers from policy-makers and epidemiologists. When he found their responses "abstract, tired and far away," he decided to adopt a more intimate approach, that is, to understand the causes and implications of the rising incidence by capturing "the inner experience of the black AIDS epidemic." But then he worried that this perspective might lead him to write "more about race than disease." As he saw it, the concept of "race is confusing," and he did not want to ascribe to racism the many policy failures

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Sheila M. Rothman, professor of public health at the Mailman School of Public Health, Columbia University, is co-author of The Pursuit of Perfection: The Promise and Perils of Medical Enhancement *(Pantheon).*

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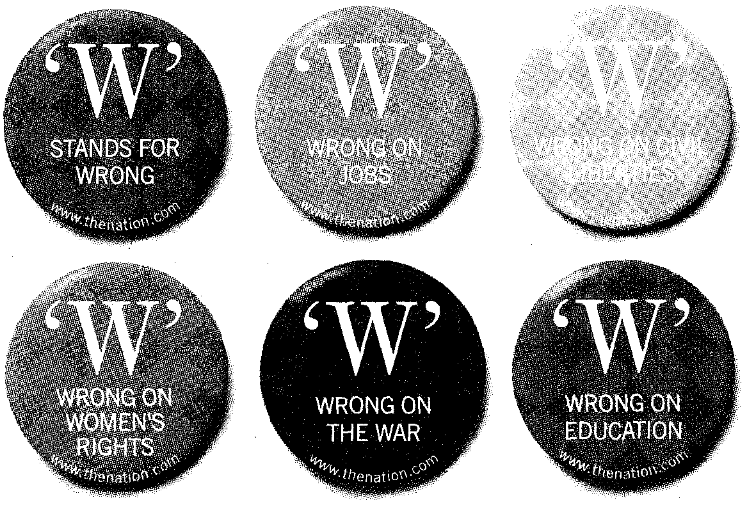
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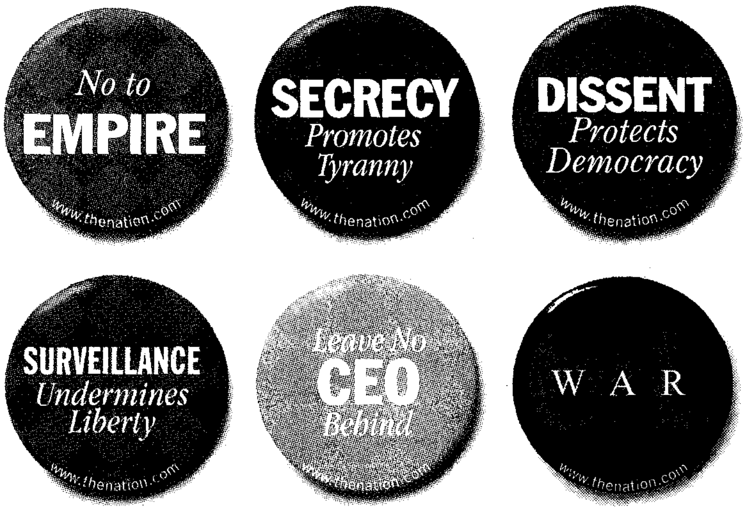
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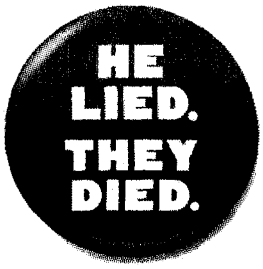
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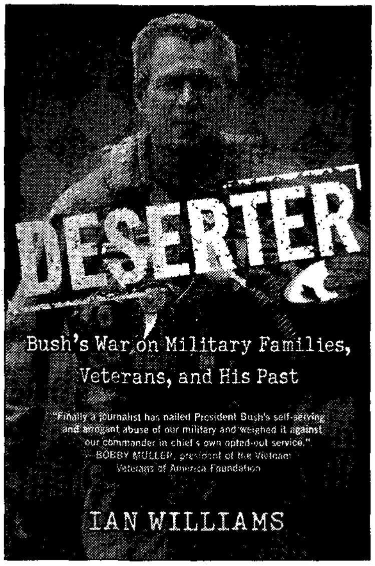
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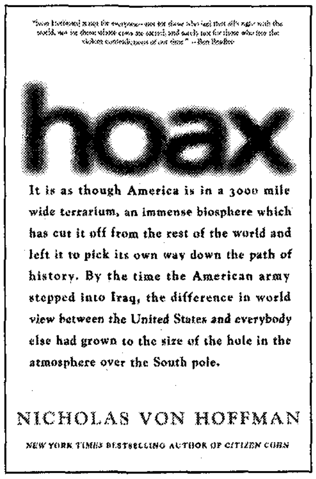
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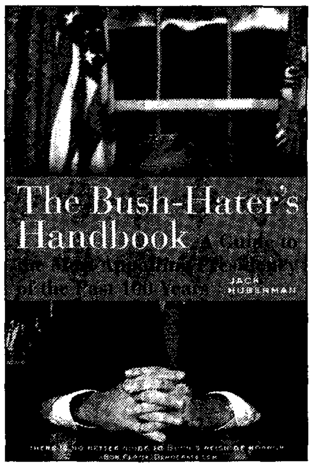
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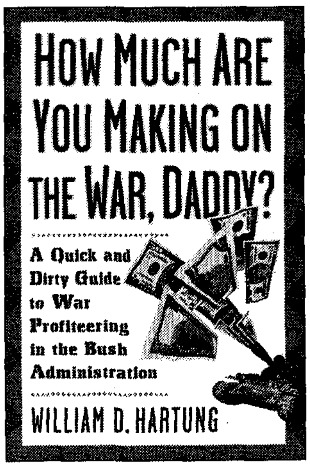
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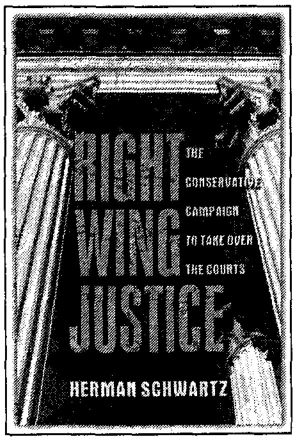
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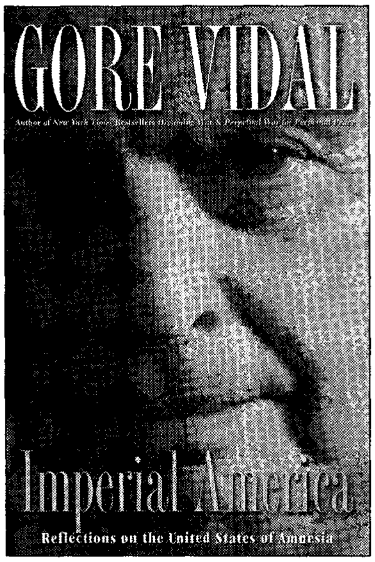
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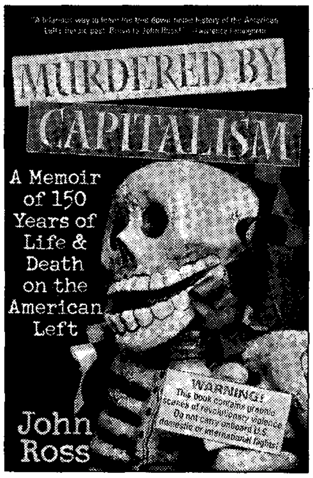
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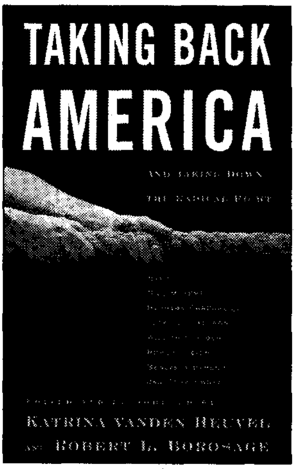
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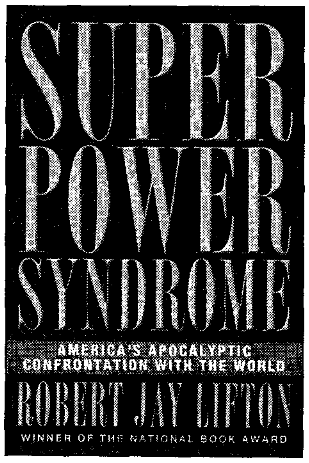
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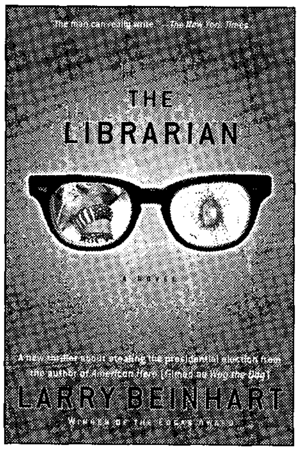
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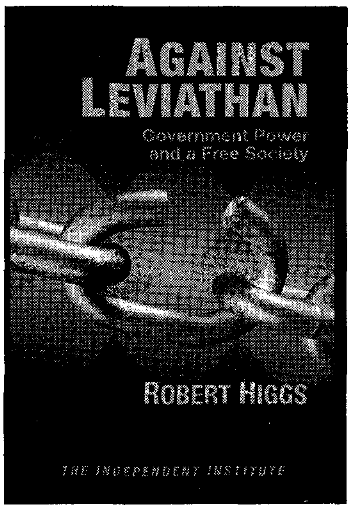
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that affect black Americans with HIV/AIDS. So he went out and conducted extensive interviews with people afflicted with AIDS, both in urban centers (Harlem, San Francisco) and rural areas (especially Alabama). He spoke to families, social workers, black gay activists and public health researchers to understand how the epidemiology of the disease interacted with poverty and social inequality.

Levenson's conversations with public health physicians and AIDS activists make clear that whites and blacks were both ambivalent about earmarking special funds for minority AIDS programs, fearful of identifying such groups with a stigmatized and deadly disease. Levenson is at his best when he illuminates an unrecognized aspect of the pandemic, namely the South's emergence as "the new frontier of AIDS in America." With the help of a social worker whose job it is to identify HIV-positive Alabamians and to assist them in getting medications, Levenson met two African-American teenagers who lived with their own mother and their baby sons in a trailer in rural Alabama. The girls, who were still in school, learned that they had the disease from perfunctory letters sent by the health department. Their blood donations were not accepted because they were "contaminated with HIV."

The social worker did manage to get them some antiretrovirals—Levenson saw many bottles of pills in the cabinet—but they were sealed. Left to their own devices, the girls made up their own regimen. They hoarded the medications because it seemed easier to get drugs when they were pregnant than afterward. They shared pills (it is unclear precisely how or why). They gave some to their boyfriends "just to be safe." Their regimen may appear pragmatic, but it is an infectious-disease expert's nightmare, certain to increase drug resistance and decrease efficacy. Along with the public policies of Alabama's Department of Health, it helps explain why the epidemic has proliferated in the South.

Rural Alabama has become a "tinderbox for an AIDS epidemic," writes Levenson. The state has very high rates of sexually transmitted diseases, of teenage pregnancies and of crack use. Small-town residents are also prone to share sexual partners. All the while, treatment is a sometime thing. The state's combination of strict eligibility criteria for Medicaid and its restrictions in funding for AIDS care means that in Alabama, more than in most states, a primitive healthcare delivery system goes along with poor monitoring and haphazard delivery of essential medicines. Some of the poorest and most vulnerable residents are on lengthy waiting lists for HIV/AIDS drugs and may die before treatment begins.

As deplorable as the plight of HIV-positive blacks in Alabama is, the situation is far from unique. Of the almost 1 million Americans who have HIV/AIDS, roughly 50 percent are not receiving medical care. Although the majority of those diagnosed with HIV/AIDS are covered by insurance (more often Medicaid than private insurance), another 20 percent are uninsured or have only very limited coverage. To be sure, the 1990 federal Ryan White CARE Act tried to create a safety net, and the AIDS Drug Assistance Programs (ADAP) sought to get drugs to the uninsured. But the ADAP has a limited budget and has not been able to negotiate deep-enough discounts from pharmaceutical companies. The result is that 1,500 people are on state waiting lists.

Levenson effectively traces the impact of the epidemic on the most vulnerable people, but he does not offer anything in the way of policy recommendations. Others do. An Institute of Medicine report incorporated the findings of a report by the Kaiser Family Foundation that described our current financing of HIV/AIDS care as "a quilt with many holes." To fill these holes, the Institute of Medicine, a private nonprofit associated with the National Academy of Sciences, proposed that Washington create a federally funded, state-administered, comprehensive care program. Whether anyone will begin to advocate effectively for these changes now that more victims are black rural Americans remains to be seen.

Given our dismal record in controlling the national epidemic, it's not surprising that we have also failed to provide international leadership. Greg Behrman's *Invisible People* explores why the United States has not implemented comprehensive policies to contain the global disease. His subtitle reflects his anger and frustration: *How the U.S. Has Slept Through the Global AIDS Pandemic, the Greatest Humanitarian Catastrophe of Our Time*. Behrman, too, relies on interviews, turning to officials at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and United States Agency for International Development (USAID), political figures in the former Clinton Administration, key ambassadors and leaders in the World Health Organization. The roster is something of a who's who of AIDS policy-makers, and Behrman makes effective use of his sources.

He starts with the CDC. If an epidemic occurs in the developing world, the CDC investigates it, because "it behooved the U.S. scientific community to know about it so that they would be...able to protect the U.S. population at home and abroad." But since the CDC has no "international surveillance responsibility," intervention is "not a mandatory responsibility." It will investigate a sudden outbreak of a disease (Legionnaire's in the United States, Ebola in Africa), track the agent and propose prevention and treatment strategies (quarantine, water-tank purification, etc.). Indeed, the CDC was among the first to grasp the threat of AIDS to Africa and gave technical assistance to colleagues there. But it is not in a position to implement prevention policies, let alone deliver treatment.

Behrman looks next at USAID. In 1986 the agency established a division of HIV/AIDS to consider global policies. But its cautious leaders kept a low profile, owing to a less than hospitable climate in Washington. The tone was set by President Reagan, who was reluctant to use the very term "AIDS" and wanted to prevent foreigners with AIDS from entering the country. As former Surgeon General C. Everett Koop explained to Behrman, Republican officials in the first decade of the pandemic viewed global AIDS as "something over there." According to Koop, the prevailing sentiment was: "If we're not going to worry about it in this country, why should we worry about a bunch of black people over there who have the same thing?" Thus, when USAID funded nongovernmental agencies that distributed condoms, it did not publicize the information; it was equally discreet about its support of gay not-for-profits in Latin America, which "would have curled conservatives' hair."

During the Clinton Administration the FDA speeded up approval of AIDS drugs and worked to make antiretrovirals more available in urban areas, but that Administration, too, was primarily concerned with containing the domestic epidemic, and it was under little pressure to change. It was not pressed either by domestic NGOs or leaders in the developing world. "With rare exception," Behrman writes, the Administration "oscillated between denial and the 'ostrich' approach."

Behrman predicts that the United States will assume a leadership role. He cites the 2003 initiative of the Bush Administration, which authorized the government to spend up to $15 billion for the prevention and treatment of global AIDS. But his optimism may be misplaced. Some money is being spent, but the initiative is moving very slowly. At least part of the reason is US pharmaceutical companies. They worry, for example, that were government funds to be used

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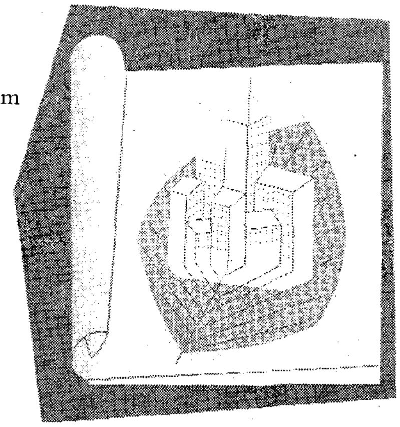

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to buy fixed-dose antiretroviral drugs manufactured in Brazil or India—which would be in the best interest of African patients—their intellectual property rights and profits might suffer. Their role notwithstanding, it is difficult to imagine that an Administration so inept at global alliances is going to take a lead in fighting a global disease.

Lawrence Gostin reaches a similarly bleak set of conclusions in *The AIDS Pandemic*, a collection of essays on the legal, ethical and political controversies raised by the disease. The history of AIDS policy, he writes, has moved from "denial, blame and punishment" to "complacency, injustice and unfulfilled expectations." The only hopeful elements emerge in Gostin's discussion of a few exemplary individuals, notably the late Jonathan Mann. In 1986 Mann founded the World Health Organization's Global Program on AIDS. He was among the first to recognize that because the pandemic was affecting vulnerable populations, a comprehensive health policy had to be based on human rights principles. Mann resisted taking one side or the other in the classic public health dilemma of how to at once police for the public health and protect individual rights. Instead, Mann sought to advance both ends. "We live in a world threatened by unlimited destructive force," he declared in 1988, "yet we share a vision of creative potential.... AIDS shows us once again that silence, exclusion, and isolation of individuals, groups, or nations, creates a danger for all us." He argued that AIDS had to be openly discussed, even in countries with no tradition of free expression; at the same time, he insisted that the privacy of HIV-positive individuals, their right to work and live in the community, had to be protected. Mann's goal, which Gostin shares, was to promote nondiscriminatory and transparent AIDS policies. We have yet to realize this agenda.

Some important efforts are under way. The persistent unwillingness of the United States to assume leadership has created a vacuum that a few national and international organizations are trying to fill. The Access to Essential Medicines Campaign, organized in 1999 by Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders), is providing a new approach premised on global interdependence. It has spearheaded a coalition to fight intellectual property laws by focusing on the provision that patent rights can be overridden in times of health emergencies. It has also collaborated with Indian pharmaceutical companies to deliver generic medicines to South African patients and is promoting the use of a three-in-one pill. It is devising methods to deliver medicines to patients when infectious-disease specialists are not to be found. When I visited its clinic in Cape Town's Kayalisha township, I was handed a twenty-page booklet with elaborate protocols that would enable nurses to monitor delivery and care of complex antiretroviral drug regimens.

The premises of this global approach have begun to influence US foundations, if not public policy. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and the Clinton Foundation have both assisted in the effort to provide essential medicines to populations that are at greatest risk. Their example may well have forced President Bush to pledge $15 billion. Perhaps their performance will compel him to pay less attention to the interests of US pharmaceutical companies and conservative opponents of condom distribution so that the funds may be used most effectively. ■

FILMS

Ashes of Time

STUART KLAWANS

BRIGHT LEAVES • ALMOST PEACEFUL

It was the perfect setup for an op-ed article: the release, between the Democratic and Republican conventions, of *Alien vs. Predator*, bearing the tag line, "Whoever wins...we lose." I could imagine what cleverness the columnists would expend, pairing each candidate with his sci-fi monster. Maybe 20th Century–Fox had actually planned for that reaction. Maybe the company had hit upon a critic-proof way to sell its movie, while thickening the wise-guy atmosphere in which the larger Fox organization thrives.

Terrifying—especially the realization that if I can think like that, I must now be as cynical as a Murdoch marketing exec.

So, in contrition, I've decided to give the partisan struggle a brief rest, at least in my movie life. While the Republicans swarm into town, I'm heading to Film Forum, which is counterprogramming the convention with a work of thoughtfulness, warmth and unbitter irony: Ross McElwee's new documentary, *Bright Leaves*.

Of course, you do encounter a form of politics in *Bright Leaves*, since nothing human (and very little that is animal or vegetable) is foreign to McElwee. He devotes a large part of the film to the physical and emotional costs of "the ultimate consumer product," cigarettes, as seen within the heartland of the industry, his home state of North Carolina. You meet a series of ailing, older smokers, including a hospital patient who was introduced to cigarettes by his grandmother at age 4. You hang out with giggly teenage smokers—students at a hair-cutting academy, which now operates out of a historic tobacco warehouse—who cheerfully promise to quit as soon as they get cancer. You visit with a twentyish couple, friends of McElwee, whose target date for giving up cigarettes somehow keeps receding into the future. You accompany a mourner to the grave of her sister, killed in her prime by consumer products.

McElwee gives due weight to this evidence of grim corporate reaping—and yet he begins his film lovingly, with a dream.

The screen shows a paradise of tall, broad leaves, so alive that they seem to breathe and whisper in the sun. On the soundtrack, McElwee relates his dream: He was standing in a field of plants, whose warmth made him happy. His wife, he says, gave him the interpretation. The plants were tobacco, for which he yearned because he had stayed in Boston too long. He needed to go back to North Carolina for a while, for his "periodic transfusion of Southernness."

With that as prelude, McElwee transports us directly back home, into the house of one of his cousins, and so (as it happens) into a different layer of dream. The middle-aged fellow you meet, who at first seems blandly Rotarian, turns out to have walls that are entirely covered with framed movie posters, file cabinets that are full of publicity stills, a walk-in closet lined with neat, built-in racks of film reels. We are into an obsession so complete that it takes itself for granted. For McElwee, it's also a communicable obsession—because this cousin claims that the life of their great-grandfather, John Harvey McElwee, was the source of the 1950 Warner Bros. movie *Bright Leaf*, directed by Michael Curtiz, with Gary Cooper and Patricia Neal.

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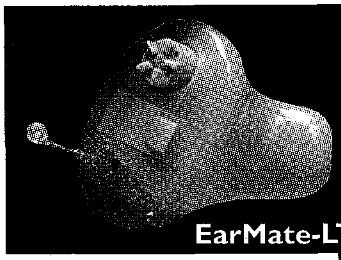

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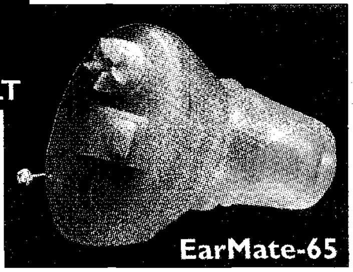

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Yes, John Harvey McElwee's bitter, losing contest with the Duke family over the rights to the Bull Durham brand is the subject of a lesser Curtiz melodrama. *Bright Leaf* is a home movie of sorts, and Gary Cooper is their great-grandfather!

Given the sorts of dreams that Southerners have entertained over the years, this isn't exactly lunacy. As McElwee sets off to investigate his family's history and learn more about *Bright Leaf*—the two endeavors, for a while, seem to be one—he begins to muse over how different his life would have been had John Harvey McElwee triumphed over the Dukes. Visions of lost wealth and honor; bittersweet thoughts of how the family has fallen. Why, North Carolina created a whole state preserve around the Duke family's original land holdings. And what did the McElwee family get? McElwee Park: a strip of lawn with two benches and a single scrawny tree, set next to the loading dock of some industrial building.

Faulkner, for all his genius, would have missed the mildness, the humor, that coexists with McElwee's disappointment at his fate. But here, to bring in a more sympathetic literary voice, and a more embracing disappointment, is McElwee's friend Allan Gurganus, who chats with relaxed eloquence about the changes he sees in the North Carolina landscape: the disappearance of a beautiful valley of tobacco fields (which killed so many people) and its replacement by densely packed housing for relocated Northerners, who have destroyed the very environment they came here to seek out.

With the fluidity of a dream, the history of a region blends into the history of an industry, the history of an industry into the history of a family, the history of the family into a sequence of moving images. McElwee knows about the effects of tobacco because his father and grandfather were medical doctors. He has the legacy of their knowledge, and also a trove of home movies of them (real home movies, without Gary Cooper). McElwee also has a legacy of his own to pass on, to his son Adrian. It won't be a vast fortune, like the Dukes', but will at least amount to his own knowledge of the past, plus many additional miles of celluloid. He's got images of Adrian at every age. There's even footage that Adrian himself helped shoot, when McElwee started to train him in the new family business.

If it's a miracle that all this should hold together—I haven't even mentioned the goats, the gospel choir, the Duke family chapel or the interview conducted from a rolling wheelchair—then the wonder is performed through the agency of Ross McElwee's personality. He is a disarming-

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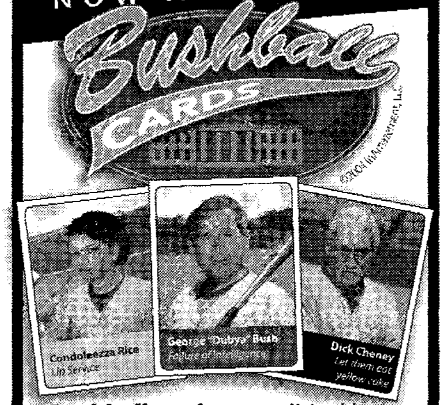

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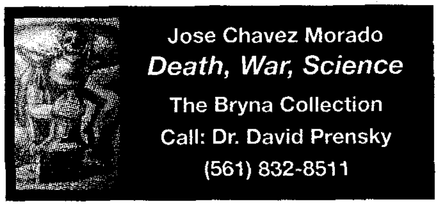
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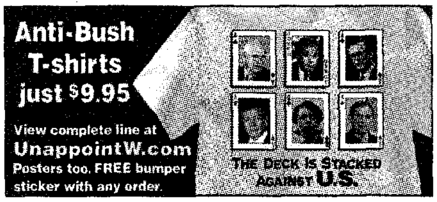
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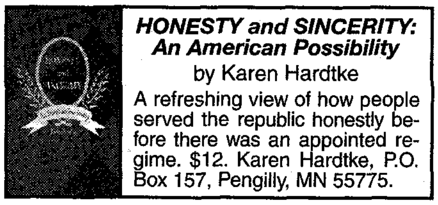
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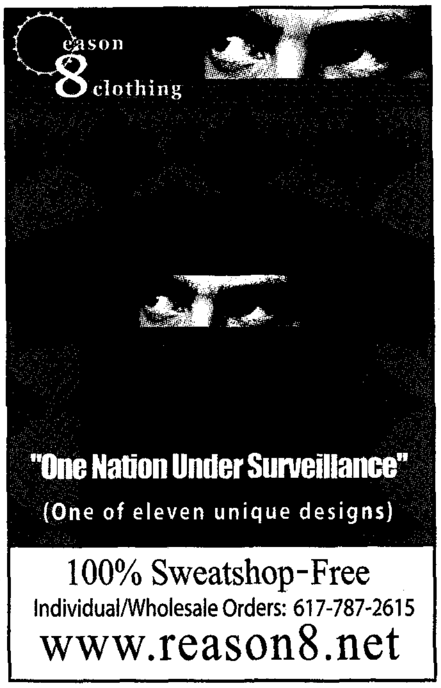
ly modest companion for the audience, and (in a muted way) perpetually hopeful. He narrates the film softly, with odd little hesitations in his voice, as if he doubted his right to speak aloud such well-crafted sentences. When he ends his brief, frequently static scenes, he can't bring himself to fade to black but goes only so far as indigo. There is always some light in his landscape of funerary monuments and beautiful, deadly vegetation.

I would have savored *Bright Leaves* whenever I saw it (the film had its local premiere last fall, in the New York Film Festival); but its living sense of history, well-earned humor and clear-eyed enjoyment of human variety seem that much more valuable now, in this frantic season. Whatever happens in the election—and, like you, I'm obsessed with the outcome—it will still matter to me that McElwee, in his obsession, has magically reversed what Michael Curtiz did in *Bright Leaf.* Rather than wrap a Hollywood fiction around the contingencies of a real family story, he has implanted in his home movie a crazy imagination worthy of Hollywood.

The shots of his son matter to me, too. Kids grow like weeds.

Michel Deville begins *Almost Peaceful* with seemingly casual images of a Paris neighborhood, intermittently frozen like still photographs. The effect is nostalgic—the period, as you can see, is the middle of the last century—but it's also gently disconcerting. You have a sense of events wanting to move onward but getting stuck, and of people living their lives on show. The reason becomes apparent as soon as the action moves indoors to Monsieur Albert's walk-up tailor shop. A new young man has come to work; and even though Albert doesn't have enough business to support the existing staff, even though the young man clearly knows nothing about sewing, room is made for him and some manageable task is assigned. The young man, it turns out, is welcome because he's a Jew, like Albert and his wife and all but one of the workers. The year is 1946.

Based on an autobiographical novel by Robert Bober, *Quoi de neuf sur la guerre*, Deville's film is the outwardly quiet story of half a dozen different people trying to resume their lives. No boxcars, no barbed wire, no violent outbursts—just the passage of ordinary days, as experienced by people who can hardly believe in such a thing. If this brings *Almost Peaceful* to the verge of oxymoron—who ever heard of a pleasant Holocaust movie?—it also addresses a reality that few filmmakers other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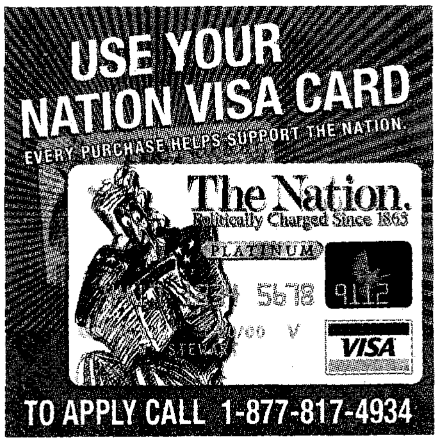
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than Deville have thought to dramatize.

Despite the importance of *The Pawnbroker* in opening up this subject matter, not every survivor turned into a self-torturing wretch. Some, like *Almost Peaceful*'s Charles (Denis Podalydès), waited futilely for the return of their families but still got through the day. Others, like Maurice (Stanislas Merhar), distracted themselves with sex, or like Albert (the bursting-with-life Simon Abkarian) kept themselves going by being the one to help others. *Almost Peaceful* is a wonderfully modulated ensemble film that appreciates these characters' small gestures. Nothing could be bigger for these people, after all, than to gather for work, gossip a little, maybe crack a joke. No act could be more heroic than to dare tell off a cop.

You can spend ninety minutes skimming along the surface of *Almost Peaceful* and come out of the theater surprised to have enjoyed yourself. You will have felt, in a minor way, the characters' astonishment at finding the world's still there.

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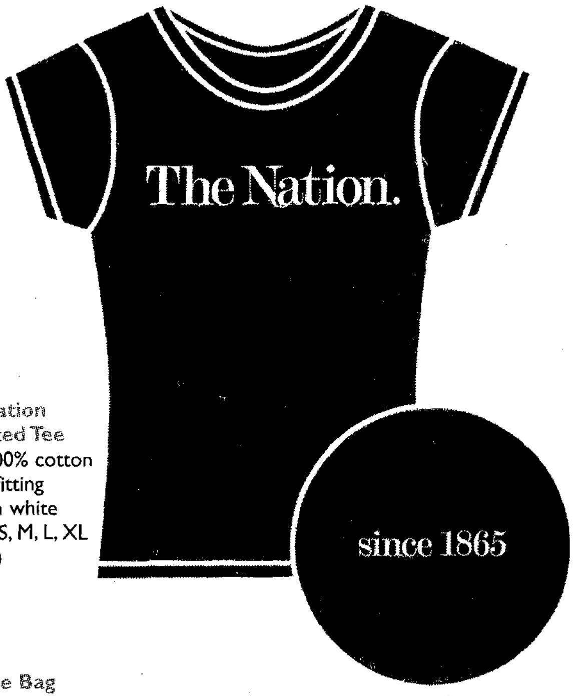
The Nation.
since 1865

back

NEW! The Nation Women's Fitted Tee
Union-made, 100% cotton logo tee, form-fitting style, black with white lettering. Sizes: S, M, L, XL (they run small)

"Worry" Cover Tees or Posters
Original artwork by Brian Stauffer on union-made full-color 100% cotton tee or glossy 18" x 24" poster

The Nation.
BLOCK BUSH

"Block Bush" Cover Tees or Posters
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HE LIED. THEY DIED.

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DISSENT
NO EMPIRE
CEO
SECRECY
SURVEILLANCE
Undermines Liberty

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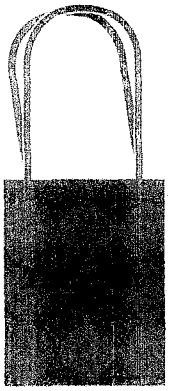
A colorful collection, 1¼" round



NEW!
The Nation Tote Bag
Lightweight, large cotton tote, imported, red with black lettering

Nation.
1865

NEW!
The Nation Coffee Mug
Handsome 11 oz. mug, imported, white with red letters

BUSH DIVIDES US
'W' STANDS FOR WRONG
'W'
'W' WRONG ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS
'W' WRONG ON THE WAR
'W' WRONG ON EDUCATION

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back

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12–18 Mo____ 18–24 Mo____

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Size: S___ M___ L___ X___ XX___

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Size: S___ M___ L___ X___ XX___

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____ **"He Lied. They Died." button @ $5**
____ **"Pinocchio" Bush Cover button @ $5**
____ **"Worry" Bush Cover button @ $5**
____ **Set of 3 buttons above @ $10**
____ **Set of 7 "W" buttons @ $10**

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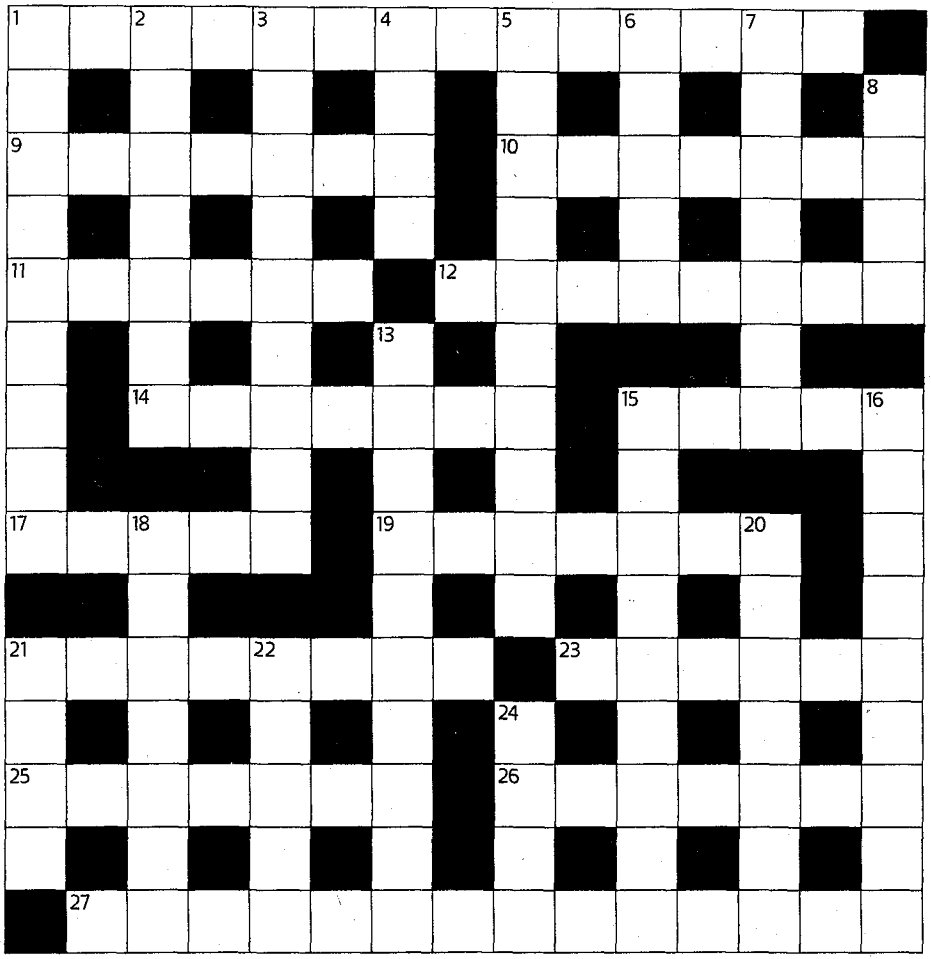

ACROSS

1 Before you are a teenager, get quiet and peruse nothing but the French scene about the start of the century. (14)

9 Something a little shaky, cast in stone, is related to one of the senses. (7)

10 The makings of the solo are considered rash! (7)

11 Bunny's relatives have a large number with women held in them. (6)

12 You are probably on board to make one, and unruly wives are seen to be about it. (4,4)

14 Listening device formerly the kind of ware jugs are made of. (7)

15 Rub the wrong way to a half-stop to do what one might do with pride? (5)

17 A little company with a typical layer formed by Octavius, the writer. (5)

19 What some go to Reno to do, but it might be the last thing you would want to do to the team! (7)

21 The sort of critic that finds no regular charm to the tune? (8)

23 How to figure out what some anti-Mussolini types wanted to do to Italy? (6)

25 It's a bad role, but with a bunch of flowers, a classical singer might show up. (7)

26 One is probably not left out in the cold but rides in with a new look. (7)

27 A single robber with a weapon could take a lot of money from you! (3-5,6)

DOWN

1 and **21** An associate who might predict what will happen this way? (13)

2 Her province was music and lyrical poetry. (7)

3 It had a lot of stories of the dream once wrought. (9)

4 Lie in luxury—three fifties lie about nothing! (4)

5 and **24** If a hat, you might have to chase it—but this is supposed act somewhat like 1 and 21 down. (5,2,3,4)

6 A good place to eat in Germany. (5)

7 Somewhat of a crook, even though the bishop might go along with it! (7)

8 Time for something to eat with the girlfriend? (4)

13 Blind enthusiasm for military glory deserves socially acceptable wine with one in the fissure. (10)

15 On the Thames, do you hit the water rather hard here? (9)

16 You can get to spot Crete from here, but it's all very hush-hush! (3,6)

18 One of Babe's specialties. (It proved the Hun destroyed Rome from the inside!) (4,3)

20 How the runner in Baskerville was pestered? (7)

21 See 1 down

22 Sweet stuff obtained by the Prince, at a little state production. (5)

24 See 5

SOLUTION TO PUZZLE NO. 2952

	W	H	O	G	O	E	S	T	H	E	R	E		
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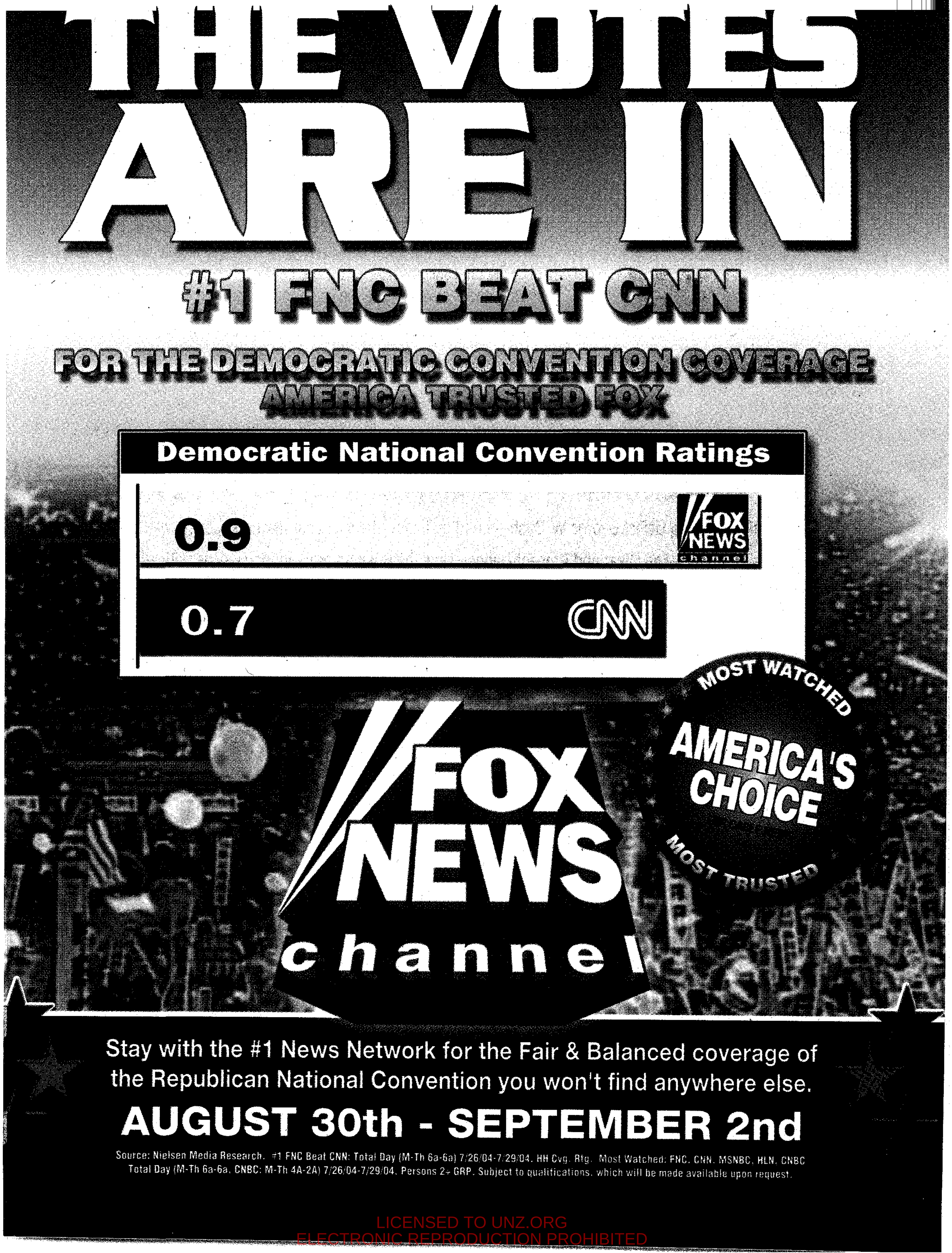

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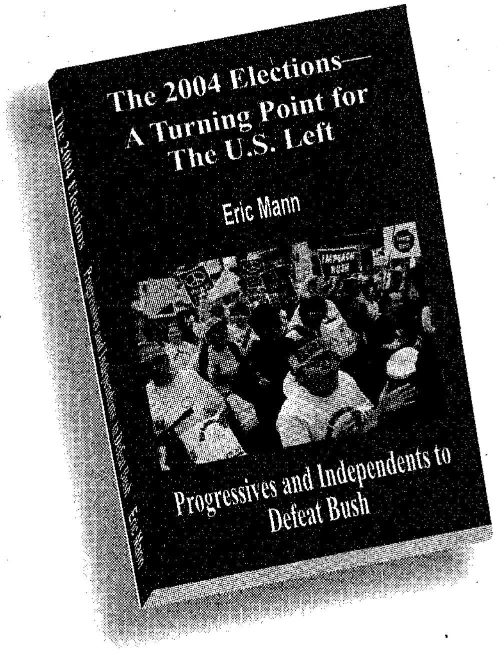
Defeat Bush and Hold Kerry Accountable



"*The 2004 Elections—A Turning Point for the U.S. Left* is another brilliant movement strategy book from Eric Mann. It gets us out of feeling that supporting Kerry is either an acceptance of defeat or a decision to place everything in abeyance until after the elections. I especially like Mann's suggestion that extensive voter registration and education continue in urban areas considered strongly Democratic, (since New York and California are hardly "safe states" for people of color) while also working in swing states where registering more voters of color could shift the balance of power.

Mann's analysis of race keeps the interests of Black and Third World people at the center of the strategy to defeat Bush. Mandatory reading for all those who are working to defeat Bush and simultaneously hold Kerry and the Democratic Party accountable to a progressive and independent mass movement."

Robin D. G. Kelly, Professor, Columbia University
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Eric Mann has been a civil rights, anti-Vietnam War, labor, and environmental organizer with the Congress of Racial Equality, the Students for a Democratic Society, and the United Auto Workers. He is the author of *Comrade George; Taking on General Motors; L.A.'s Lethal Air*, and the new *Dispatches from Durban: Firsthand Commentaries on the World Conference Against Racism and Post-September 11 Movement Strategies.*

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